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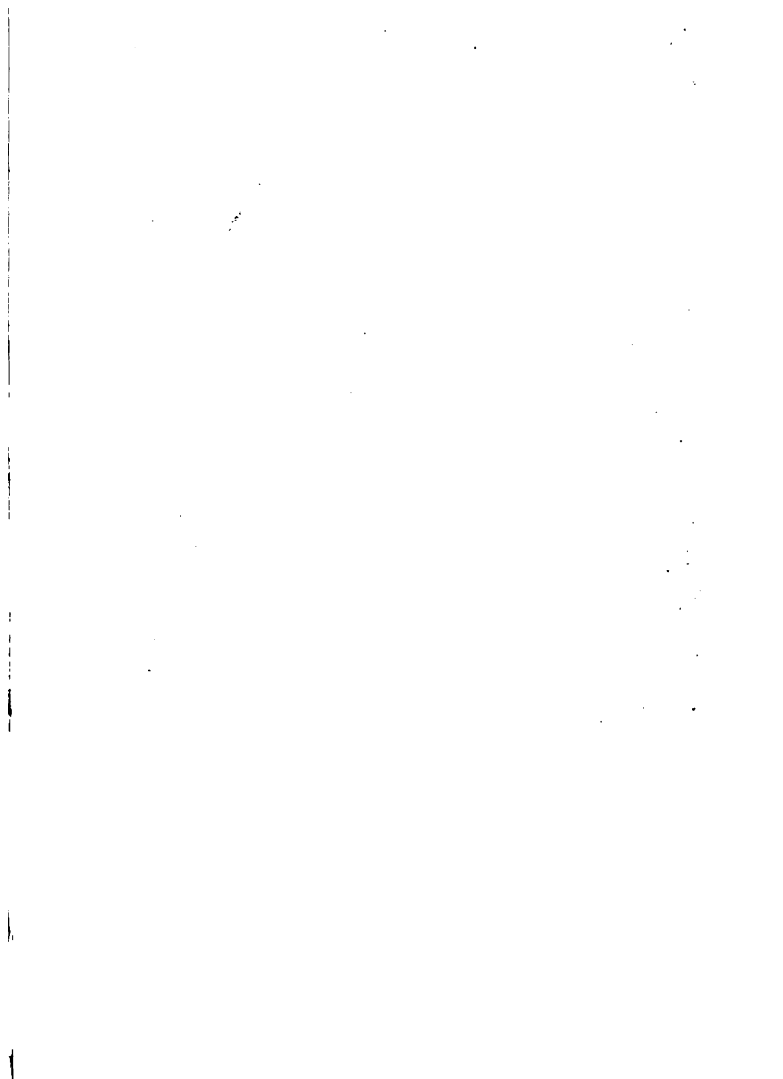
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ROSALIND AND FELICIA;

OR,

THE SISTERS.

LONDON :
A. and G. A. SPOTTISWOODE,
New-street-Square.





Clara Cayser, pinxit

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THE LEYCESTERS.

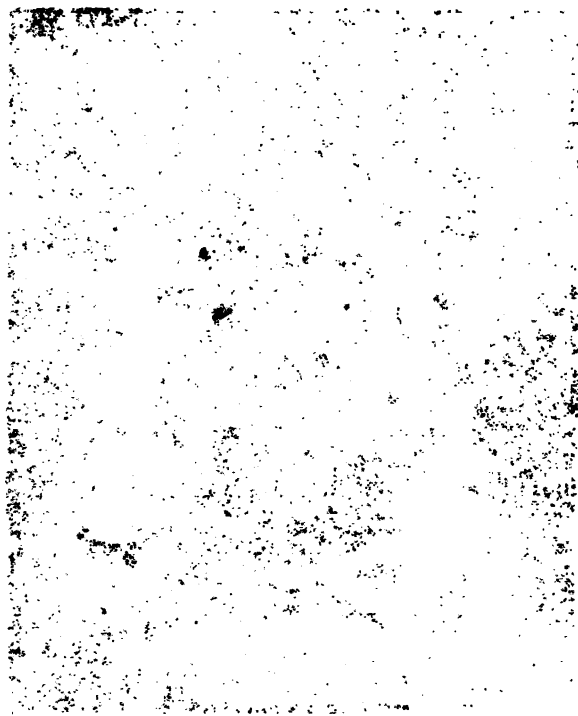
Before they could resume the conversation thus interrupted, Rosalind burst upon their privacy in her masquerade habit. Never had she looked more lovely, and, in contemplating her, Felicia forgot her chagrin.

London: Published by Richard Bentley, 1854.

OLIVER AND BOYD, EDINBURGH;
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1854.

249. C. 284.





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OR,

THE SISTERS.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"HISTORICAL PICTURES OF THE MIDDLE AGES,"

&c. &c. &c.

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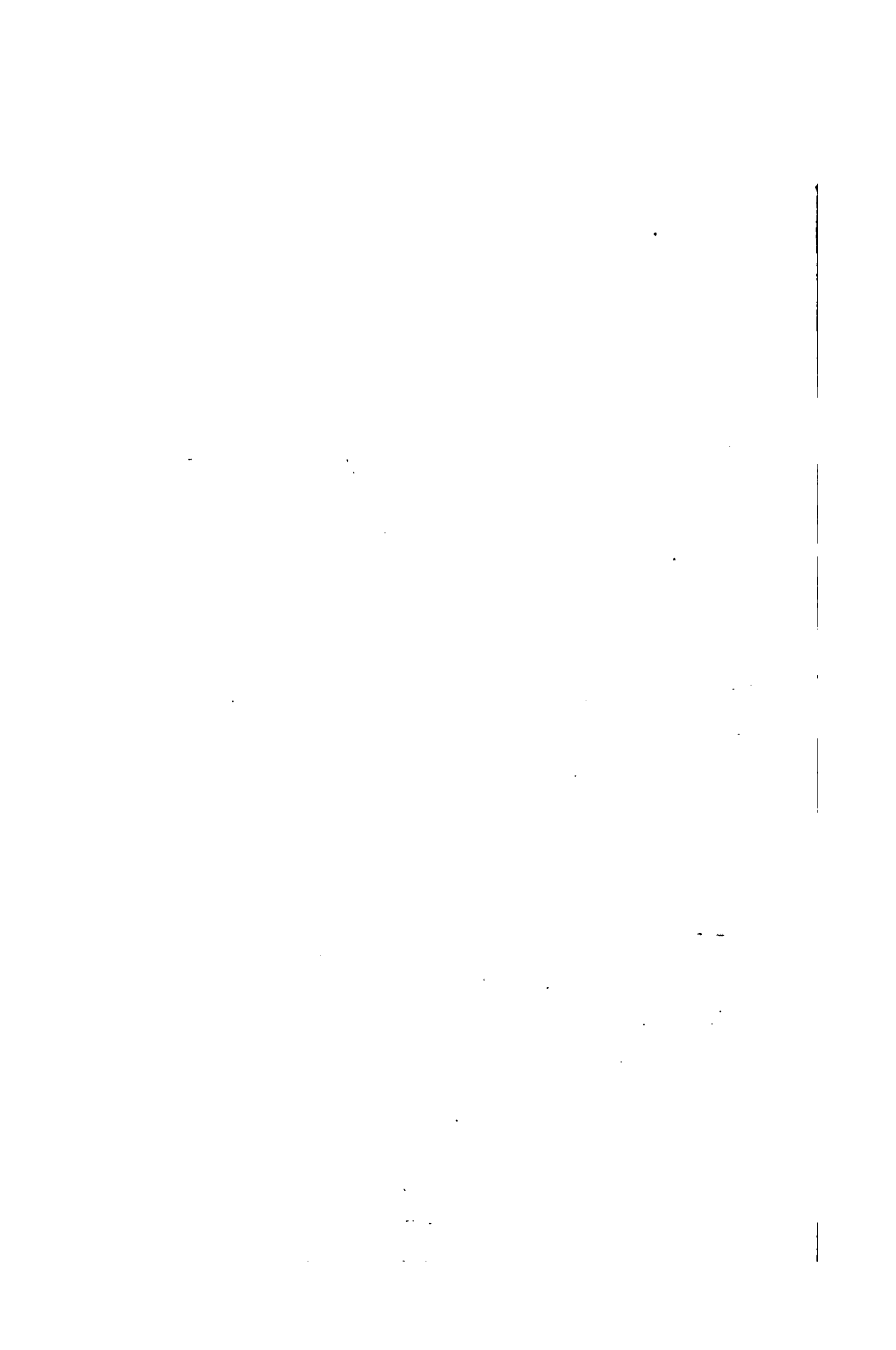
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1854.

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TO
SARAH AND BLANCHE HILDITCH,

THIS NEW EDITION OF

"THE SISTERS, ROSALIND AND FELICIA LEYCESTER,"

IS DEDICATED

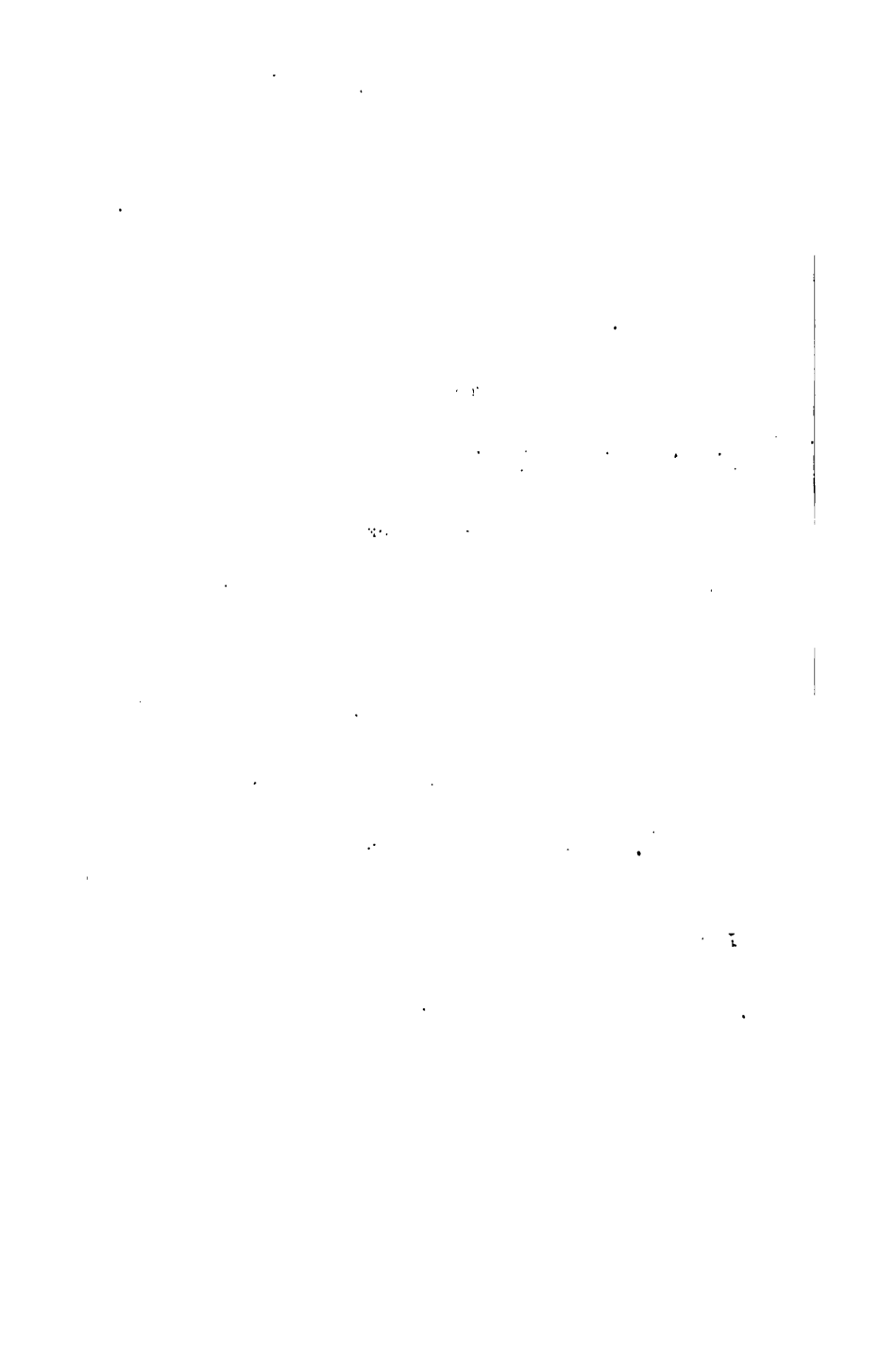
IN AFFECTIONATE MEMORIAL

BY THEIR MUCH ATTACHED FRIEND AND RELATIVE,

THE AUTHORESS.

December, 1853





PREFACE.

MANY years have passed away since the first appearance of "The Sisters, Rosalind and Felicia Leycester." The Authoress went abroad; and her protracted absence, together with circumstances over which she had no control, prevented the reprinting of the work till now. She was gratified by much generous encouragement at the period, and therefore ventures to hope that this new edition, carefully corrected and embodying some alterations then suggested to her by various literary friends, will not be less favourably received.

She has yet some words to add, which she trusts will not be misconstrued. More for the sake of the gentleman who is bringing this work again before the public than herself, she thinks it her duty to state that it was written six-and-twenty years before the appearance of "Emilia Wyndham;" because did she not do so, some sharp-sighted critic, or offended friend of the authoress of that most talented novel, might view "The Sisters" in the light of a plagiarism. In the first volume of D'Israeli's "Amenities of Literature," article "Cædmon and Milton," are some exceedingly curious and interesting observations on the undesigned coincidences and similarities of authors.

It is the province of genius to make free and wise use of the reading which prepares for writing. Shakspeare and Milton were remarkable instances of what some might term, but unjustly and ungenerously, plagiarism. It is a doubt still among literary men whether Milton had ever read the Poem of "The Saxon Father of English Song,"

despite "*its singular correspondence even in expression with 'Paradise Lost.'*" From personal experience of the working of her own mind, she is aware how easily what once made a deep impression may after long forgetfulness spring up fresh again to the recollection, without the remembrance of when or where it was acquired. She was astonished only a few weeks ago, whilst preparing a second edition of the "Historical Pictures of the Middle Ages," at the resemblance between her account of the Abbot of St. Gall's vision, page 286. vol. i., and page 60. vol. i. of the "Amenities of Literature," relative to the Monastery of Whitby. She wrote that work in Italy, and D'Israeli's "Amenities of Literature" had never been seen by her for many years.

She concludes this self-vindictory explanation by saying, and sincerely, that whether the attachment of Rosalind and Felicia—their undesignated rivalry—with the other startling coincidences in the two works, were suggested or not to the authoress of "Emilia Wyndham" by her previous story, she must feel flattered that there is so much similarity between them in plot, incident, and character, however inferior in execution. To have given birth to a successor so *truly beautiful*, and abounding in such admirable moral lessons, would be no light honour.

December, 1853.

ROSALIND AND FELICIA LEYCESTER.

CHAPTER I.

"When the fight of grace is fought, —
When the marriage vest is wrought, —
When Faith hath chased cold Doubt away,
And Hope but sickens at delay, —
When Charity, imprisoned here,
Longs for a more expanded sphere,
Doff thy robes of sin and clay ;
Christian, rise, and come away."

It was on a fine clear evening that Felicia Leycester yielded to the entreaties of a dying relative, and sought in the little garden that surrounded her humble habitation to regain that serenity which grief and anxiety had banished from her bosom.

It was late in June: the rays of the setting sun illuminated the Gothic windows of the village church, and flashed bright in the latticed casements of her home. The long shadows of evening softly blended with the golden radiance of declining day—a balmy breeze gently waved the feathery branches of the surrounding trees, while the soft trills of the thrush, pouring out its evening song, mingled with the lively chatter of the swallow, and the distant sound of the sheep-bell.

But Felicia's eye and ear were closed against these charms. She had been for months ministering to the declining health of a more than parent, and her spirits had gradually sunk under the task. Yet during her long and painful watchings by the couch of sickness, she felt no weariness—no real anguish till now, when she had ceased to hope the protectress of her infancy would repay her cares, and revive to life and health. Long had she turned with loathing from the contemplation of such a separation, and buoyed up by the ardour of youth, flattered herself the impending blow was far distant,—that the existence which was dearer to her than life itself, might be prolonged to an interminable period. Vainly had Mrs. Beauclerc's medical attendants refused to sanction her hopes, or Mrs. Beauclerc entreated her

to prepare for what she felt was inevitable. The sunny brightness of a youthful breast, the effervescence of an unworn spirit cannot be depressed; and Felicia continued to cherish the delusion, to hope even against hope.

She knew that she must at some period be torn from this dear relative—that her long indisposition must terminate in dissolution; but she could not bear to think that “the life which made her own life pleasant” was near its close—that the gates of death would soon shut upon her prospects. Nor is this unwillingness to approximate what we dread, a weakness peculiar to the young. We all know we must submit to the unavoidable ills of life, but we studiously turn away from whatever is calculated to remind us of them; and by a strange kind of infatuation seem to imagine that the impending stroke of affliction may be delayed by never suffering ourselves to reflect upon its approach.

But on this fatal evening the illusive visions which had so long overshadowed her reason were dispelled; and one overwhelming thought absorbed every agonised feeling. The fearful moment of separation must now she felt soon arrive, and it was in vain she tried to soften its horrors. She had indulged idle hopes of future felicity; her fancy had followed a meteor of happiness kindled by herself, till her mind had become unequal to bear the weight of the blow she ought to have been prepared for enduring.

For the first time she saw she was on the eve of parting with her whose care had supplied the place of her earthly parents; whose kindness had soothed her infant sufferings; and whose love had shed a warmer glow over the dawning joys of life. Even in a few short hours she, whose maternal affection, struggling with the agonies of death, had banished her from the pillow of sickness, might be no more—the eye, whose fond glance she had been accustomed to watch with love and reverence, might be enshrouded for ever—the hand, which had guided her infancy, nerveless in death—the tongue, whose silver tones had breathed only the accents of tenderness and virtue, hushed in the grave—and the heart, throbbing with all the warm feelings of humanity, cold in its silent bosom. A sensation of chilly alarm stole over her shuddering frame as this awful picture arose to her imagination, and she shrank from contemplating even in their fairest forms the awful characters of death. Yet no apprehension for the fate of the pilgrim, so soon to enter into an unknown world, mingled with her emotion. She felt assured the spirit, now bowed down by its frail tenement, would soar to a better world—be arrayed in the light and glory of immortality. It was that vague indefinite sensation with which we are doomed to view the first punishment of guilty man, the first curse of an offended Creator, and the soul vainly tries to shake off its mysterious lesson.

The romantic shadows of twilight were gradually fading away in the mild glories of a cloudless moon, when Felicia returned to

the chamber of sickness, and stole softly to the side of her aunt. Her eyes were closed, and the hand of death had already imprinted a ghastliness that struck her with terror. Yet the serenity of her pale features remained unimpaired. It was the sunken eye — the livid hue — that alone betrayed the approach of dissolution. The soul seemed wrapt in a holy calm — Felicia hung over the bed with anguished solicitude; and, fearful of disturbing the fluttering spirit, suppressed the struggling sighs of a breaking heart; but her tears fell fast, and one unconsciously dropped on the marble hand of the dying object of her tenderness. She looked up; the moon streamed full on her face — it was already moulded into more than mortal beauty; and a smile of ineffable sweetness lighted up her faded eyes.

"Dear child," said she, fondly pressing her trembling hand, "how grateful ought I to be that my last moments have been blessed by thy affection!"

"Felicia, my beloved!" she continued, struggling to acquire strength, "weep not for me. The Father of the fatherless will support thee. I must, indeed, leave thee; but I leave thee not, even in this world, without consolation. May he whom thou lovest reward thy affection, and appreciate thy merit; and when, like me, thou art on the brink of the grave, may thy Heavenly Protector shed a gleam of brightness to cheer thee through the dark valley of death!"

She paused, overpowered by emotion; and Felicia, wildly throwing herself on the bed, gave way without control to the anguish of her heart.

"Dear child," she cried in a low tremulous voice, "moderate these transports. *Let no earthly love engross the best affections of thy soul.* Place not thy hopes of happiness on creatures frail and mutable as thyself, lest when they are snatched from thee by death, thou canst not look beyond the tomb for a glorious reunion." Her voice faltered, the damps of death sat on her changing brow, and her eyes closed as if in sleep.

Felicia scarcely respired: she felt ashamed of disturbing the silence of such a moment with the ebullitions of selfish grief, and motionless she remained where she had thrown herself.

Deepening shadows proclaimed the approach of evening. The loneliness of night came on — and all was breathlessly still. Felicia's eyes were fixed on her aunt, and by the fluctuating light of an expiring taper, she thought she slept. Gradually the dark clouds of midnight dispersed — the glad signs of approaching dawn met her eyes; and the first rays of early morning, streaking with uncertain light the distant horizon, dimly streamed through the half-closed shutters.

"Blessed be Heaven, she has lived to see another day!" was Felicia's fond and silent aspiration, as a gleam of radiance shed its quivering ray on the features of her aunt; and the dim eyes, which she had feared she might never more see illumined by the

beams of life, slowly opened. One glance — fond, lingering, anxious — met Felicia's; and she was breathing a half-expressed prayer of joy, when they closed — the hand she had so long grasped grew cold and motionless. She eagerly gazed in her face to receive again the look of love; but in vain. It was the last expression of dying attachment — the pure spirit had left its earthly mansion — was gone to kindred angels!

Felicia clasped her arms around the body with frantic emotion, and bent her head to catch once more the accents of that voice so dear! — but no sound broke the dreary stillness — no heart throbbed against hers — all was cold — silent as the grave — and when dread certainty burst on her tortured senses, overpowered nature sank under the stroke.

CHAP. II.

"Oh! weep not for 'her,' 'tis unkindness to weep;
The weak weary body hath fallen asleep;
No more of fatigue or endurance it knows:
Oh! weep not—Oh! break not the gentle repose.
'She' sleeps—Oh, how kindly, on Jesus's breast!
Never more the sick dreamings shall trouble 'her' rest;
And her lips, that would healing and comfort restore,
Shall burn 'her' cold lips and cold cheeks never more."

NEALE.

WHEN the iron hand of adversity first presses on the youthful heart, it believes that all human happiness is swept away for ever, and that the anguish of the present bitter hour will impregnate the cup of life to its close. But an all-wise Creator, ever alive to the weaknesses and sorrows of his creatures, has mercifully appointed bounds to still the raging ocean, and the yet wilder emotions of the human heart. The agony with which Felicia first contemplated the irreparable loss she had sustained, gradually subsided into the calmness of chastened grief; and although, with the inexperience of early youth, she thought this heavy dispensation would ever cast a shade over her future days, she regained sufficient composure to write to the relative who had promised, on Mrs. Beauclerc's dissolution, to grant her an asylum, — and perform the necessary duties which fond affection has a melancholy pleasure in paying to the loved remains of departed worth.

Even the performance of these sad offices tends to detach the mind from the contemplation of its sorrows, and alleviates the first bitterness of separation. But these were not the only sources of Felicia's composure. She remembered the dying admonitions of expiring tenderness, and the perturbations of her spirit were soothed by the hope of a reunion with her she mourned — by the

consciousness that the enfranchised spirit was now the inhabitant of purer skies, of a more congenial world.

The letter she had addressed to her aunt, Lady Wyedale, was instantly answered by her only sister, Rosalind Leycester, repeating Lady Wyedale's promise of protection, till her marriage with a gentleman to whom she had been sometime engaged could take place, and requesting to see her without delay in London, where she then was.

But though grateful for Lady Wyedale's wish to save her from witnessing the awful ceremony of Mrs. Beaucherc's interment, Felicia could not bear to tear herself from her remains till the tomb should wrest them from her view. Hers was the love that clings to the object of its tenderness even in death, and feels that the pang which marked the flight of the disembodied spirit, is scarcely less acute than that which shoots through the heart when the inanimate form is torn from the eyes which have had a mournful joy in dwelling on its altered features, in fancying that the link which bound them together is not yet entirely sundered. And both from affection and respect she resolved to watch by the relics of her almost parent till they were committed to their native earth.

Death is always an awful visitor, but he is never more felt than when his fell scythe sweeps down one on whom we have been accustomed to look with reverence, as well as affection—one who has been a guide as well as companion—a protector as well as friend. When such a one is wrested from us, we experience a sensation of desolateness that is more pitiable than the most poignant affliction, and the mind long vainly seeks to recover from the blow. The unaffected piety—the calm resignation—the patient sickness—the undeviating tenderness—the tranquil death—increase the bitterness of our grief—the greatness of our loss.

Oh, these are the sorrows which teach us to fix our hopes on another world; for these admit of no earthly consolation. The friend we mourn is gone into the grave and can no more return to us!—But though the object of our unavailing regret will never again bless our mortal sight, we know that the soul we loved liveth for ever, and in the hope of a blissful reunion we learn to lie down in that dark chamber, with resignation to the will of Him, who hath appointed it the passage to immortality.

During the melancholy interval between Mrs. Beaucherc's decease and interment, Felicia had none to console her—none to avert from her mind the dreary solemnity of the scene. The only attendant she admitted to her privacy was herself too much under its influence to soothe or allay the sufferings of another. She was faithful and affectionate, but the very child of terror; and in committing her alarms to Felicia, felt herself partly relieved from their oppressive weight. She detailed the many omens and prognostics, which she insinuated had deprived her

of any feeling of surprise on this mournful occasion, till Felicia, her mind weakened by sorrow and solitude, almost partook of her apprehensions;—startled at every gust, and as her eye glanced on the chilly, lonely appearance of the apartments, felt her anguish heightened by the indescribable alarms of superstition.

“Yet why am I thus terrified?” she sometimes mentally reasoned: “I must soon be even as she is—cold—stiff—insensible,—I too shall become an object of terror, till the grave shall shut me from the land of the living!”

And as this solemn picture passed before her eyes, she thought she should never again feel any interest in the pursuits of so fleeting an existence.

With that intenseness of feeling which refuses the relief of tears, she bent over the grave of Mrs. Beaucherc, and when the coffin vanished from her aching sight, returned to her desolate home with sensations of dreariness and anguish that mocked the voice of consolation.

When the pomp of death is over, the awful paraphernalia completed, and the body we loved consigned to its narrow bed; the agony which attends this second parting is more tolerable than the stillness, the deathly calmness which follows. Nothing more remained to be done to evince her love or respect; she now felt the whole of her loss, and two days she had indulged in unrestrained grief, when she was aroused by the information that Mr. Evanmore desired to see her, if only for a few minutes. His petition, as that of her affianced husband, she felt she could not decline, and she summoned resolution to enter the room where he sat. He had accompanied her to the last home of Mrs. Beaucherc, but no intercourse had taken place since her dissolution, and sobs impeded her utterance when she tried to say she was happy to see him.

He gazed on her sickly features with tender concern. “Dear Felicia,” cried he, fondly drawing her nearer to him, “for my sake check these unavailing regrets. Remember your aunt is now receiving the reward of a life passed in the exercise of every virtue, and rather rejoice that she has passed that dark vale which all must tread.”

Felicia pressed his hand, but was unable to reply, and Evanmore anxiously sought to introduce some less distressing topic.

“When are we to part, dear Felicia?” said he, in a tone of affectionate interest.

“The day after to-morrow I purpose setting off for town.”

“So soon! surely Felicia it is not kind to tear yourself thus early from me. Yet I will not press your stay, I believe you are best away; but remember those you leave behind. In the delights of the gay metropolis remember the claims of him whose affection was hallowed by the sanction of your aunt.”

“Oh, never! never!” cried she, “shall I forget them. The

world can bestow no friends so dear as those from whom I shall be separated—no pleasures so pure as those I have left behind me.”

“You think so now; but you have hitherto lived in seclusion. You have seen little of life, and I own I fear,” his voice faltered, “when surrounded by the brilliant circles of the great, receiving the homage of men more gifted than myself, you will learn to forget the humble scenes and associates of your youth.”

“If I did not regard these suspicions as the ravings of a lover, I should be tempted to feel angry at their injustice,” said she with a smile. “I have many faults, but I flatter myself selfishness, caprice, and ingratitude are not in the catalogue.”

“Dear Felicia, forgive me, I meant not to breathe the slightest censure. I know you are the most generous and affectionate of beings; but it is so natural for a young mind to yield to such allurements, that I dreaded even yours might not be able to withstand their fascination.”

“Not natural, surely, to lose amongst strangers the remembrance of those whose disinterested attachment brightened the morning of our life! And, oh! Evanmore, can you fear that she, whose mind was formed by an angel, could banish from her breast, in scenes of gaiety and joy, the sacred engagement into which she had voluntarily entered?”

Evanmore caught her to his breast. “How I have wronged you! Oh, Felicia, dearer to me now than when I first sought to obtain your affections, forget my unfounded doubts, and let not my jealous apprehensions prevent you from mixing in that society, from partaking of those amusements from which you have, perhaps, hitherto been too much excluded. With your exalted disposition, your virtuous principles, I fear not you will pass the ordeal, and, like fine gold tried in the crucible, become yet more valuable to your Evanmore and the world.”

“The suspicions of a lover have ended with the flatteries of one,” said Felicia, faintly smiling through her tears. “But I must not suffer myself to be deluded by them. The world is, I am aware, a scene of severe temptation; and while I now think it scarcely possible for me to suffer from its contagion, I must, when environed by its dangers, be careful that presumptuous confidence may not effect that, which, while unexposed and secure, I deemed so impossible.”

“I have no fears,” said Evanmore gaily.

Felicia shook her head; but the smile that dwelt on her lips strengthened the confidence of her lover, and they parted amid mutual protestations of never-changing attachment.

CHAP. III.

" Full well she knew to scatter virtue's seed
 In fair profusion o'er the fruitful heart :
 To pluck betimes rank vice's poisoned weed,
 That soon with deepening root would mock her art ;
 To act the Mentor and companion's part ;
 To lure to knowledge, while she seemed to play,
 And, grave Instruction's formal looks apart,
 To teach the youth to walk in wisdom's way,
 Which she would fondly paint in hues of opening day — "

THOUGH Felicia shrunk from the moment that would tear her from the home which had sheltered her infancy, from the friends whose kindness and fondness had brightened even the sunny season of youth, and separate her from the dear remains of a relative who had watched over her with a mother's care, many fair presages of future happiness lent their aid to soften the parting pang.

She was going for the first time into a new world, all its scenes sketched by the pencil of twenty, and illumined by the glowing sunshine of inexperience. She was on the eve of being reunited to a sister scarcely two years younger than herself, whose image was intertwined around every fibre of her heart. Years had elapsed since they met, but the pleasing impression left on her mind by Rosalind's sprightly, open countenance, and engaging, animated manners, had sunk so deep, that time and absence vainly interposed to obliterate it.

Sentiment, as well as affection, contributed to keep alive in such a bosom as Felicia's, the attachment of childhood. They were the orphan daughters of a Major Leycester, who was killed in action, and during the first years of their existence had lived with their mother. Grief for the loss of a husband, loved to such excess, that she had sacrificed for him a father's home, and a father's blessing, united to a constitution naturally delicate, then bowed the fragile flower to its native earth ; and the little orphans were torn from each other's embrace to enter into very different scenes. Felicia, the eldest, was received under the roof of a maternal aunt, the Honourable Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc ; Rosalind was claimed by the sister of her late father, Lady Wyedale.

Mrs. Beauclerc, the eldest sister of Mrs. Leycester, was the only member of the family who condescended to notice her after her union with Major Leycester, and she had wished to extend her maternal kindness equally to her youngest niece ; but Major Leycester, apprehending Mrs. Leycester might not survive to protect his children to womanhood, had consented, ere his death, that Rosalind should be consigned to his sister if, during his absence, deprived of a mother's care. Nor was he sorry that his sister's wish to adopt her god-daughter would tend to relieve Mrs. Beauclerc from the heavy responsibility of providing for

both his children. He was a soldier of fortune, and though his manners possessed the high polish of military refinement, he was more indebted to nature for a fine person and superior understanding, than to birth or education; for his father was a country clergyman struggling with a large family, and his sister owed her elevation in society to the same personal attractions which had induced Mrs. Leycester to relinquish all the allurements of rank and affluence, to share his humble views. His high spirit had been deeply wounded by the continued neglect of her friends, and though the undeviating kindness of Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc had awakened his warmest gratitude, he felt almost hurt that his children should owe anything to their mother's family, and would have been happy had Lady Wyedale offered her protection ere he had acceded to Mrs. Beauclerc's request.

Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc was a woman of great natural talent, improved by a judicious and superior education, at a time when the fashion of the day deemed it wrong to instruct women even to write their native tongue with ease and propriety; or capriciously bestowed upon them a species of learning which, as it then rendered them prodigies and wonders, generally made them useless and conceited. Her mother wisely pursued the middle path, and laboured to preserve her equally from the dangers of ignorance and the errors of pedantry. Gentle by nature, pious from a deep practical conviction of the truths of Christianity, humble in her opinion of herself, and upright in the discharge of every duty to her Creator and fellow-creatures, Mrs. Honoria Beauclerc was eminently calculated to form the ductile mind of early youth. She received the little Felicia as the melancholy legacy of an unfortunate sister,—mentally resolved to supply to her infant charge the parent she had lost, and to the conscientious discharge of this important trust she thenceforth devoted her whole existence. With gentle, but unceasing assiduity, she strove to instil into her mind all that renders woman estimable; and her care and her kindness were repaid by the unbounded reverence and enthusiastic attachment of her young relative, who grew up what she had wished her to be—sensible, amiable, affectionate, and pleasing, rather than brilliant or fascinating.

Mrs. Beauclerc was a woman of high birth, but slender fortune, for her portion as a younger child was a bare six thousand pounds, together with a life interest in the pretty furnished cottage she inhabited. She had early pledged her affections to an amiable man; but as both were young, and he possessed little beside an illustrious name, he sought on the shores of India to acquire that competency without which no marriage can be a happy one. But in the chequered scene of human life the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; and after spending ten years in the pursuit of riches, he returned with a trifling fortune and broken constitution, to die in the arms of her

whose youth and loveliness had been wasted in unavailing regret at his absence.

With him vanished her prospects of earthly bliss. A widow indeed, although never wedded, she withdrew from the society of all but a few chosen friends, seeking and finding consolation in the exercises of active benevolence, and Christian faith. Time had assuaged the bitterness of her sorrow ere the young Felicia was consigned to her protection, and in watching the luxuriant unfoldings of the good seed she daily implanted — her own heart once more responded to happiness.

Assured that Lady Wyedale, who had no family of her own, would consider Rosalind as her child, it had been her intention to bequeath the whole of her little property to Felicia; but Felicia, aware of her design, so earnestly entreated that Rosalind might share it with her, that she was unable to refuse a petition which accorded so entirely with her own generous feelings, and was so honourable to her favourite niece. She was however half tempted to revert to her original determination, when Felicia caught the affections, and received the addresses of Mr. Evanmore; for though her self-denying habits and judicious economy enabled her to support her station on a narrow income, she had been so accustomed to all the refinements of polished life, and to witness the unbounded extravagance that usually accompanies them, that she feared Mr. Evanmore's fortune alone would scarcely supply the expenses incident to his rank and Felicia's. But Felicia refused to admit of any alteration in her favour, and Mr. Evanmore so warmly seconded her wishes, that Mrs. Beauclerc reluctantly consented to adhere to her promise.

With Mr. Evanmore she had been slightly acquainted from his infancy, and when he sought her consent to his union with Felicia, there was a something so mild, so gentlemanly, so pleasing in his manners and deportment, that she felt happy in the idea of resigning her adopted child to his protection, though his fortune was scarcely fifteen hundred a year, encumbered with a jointure of five hundred during the life of his mother with whom he resided. But he stood high in the esteem of the world, and she watched their growing attachment with the fond eyes of approving love. Some few errors she had perceived in Evanmore, but they were such as seemed almost incident to his character and age: such as, she doubted not, time, and the firmer mind of his affianced bride would easily eradicate. Lady Wyedale had promised to afford her a home till Evanmore could claim her hand, and without a fear she committed the cherished object of her tenderness to a stormy world, secure that that Being who never slumbereth nor sleepeth would guard her from every real ill.

CHAP. IV.

"Dear seat of my childhood, for ever adieu !
 Too soon wilt thou fade from my sorrowing view,
 And the riv'let that winds at the foot of this tree
 Reflect on its bosom no image of me.
 Yet oft shall my fancy revisit this scene,
 And tread, as in childhood, each mountain and green,
 Where careless I plucked the gay flow'rets of May,
 Nor grieved that these joys pass so quickly away.
 How often shall Memory pencil the spot
 Where bosomed in trees stood the villager's cot ;
 Its straw-covered roof peeping soft through the spray,
 Its garden with wall-flowers and holly-oak gay :
 Or see mid the thicket, when morning first broke,
 Curling light to the breeze the hamlet's blue smoke.
 And thy tower, loved Leominster, all glitt'ring with dew,
 How oft shalt thou stand in my fanciful view !
 Still, still thou shalt teach my fond spirit to rise,
 And point as in youth every hope to the skies."

THE first pale rays of dawning day scarcely glimmered on the distant horizon, when Felicia stole into that room which for years had appeared to her to possess something of sacredness.

It was the apartment of her aunt—in it she had first really learnt she was an immortal being. In it she had been taught that she was by profession a Christian, and with uplifted hands had solemnly vowed never to disgrace the name she bore. It had been the scene of most of her childish indulgences, and witnessed the last hours of one she now believed a saint in Heaven.

All was yet dark and still, when she threw herself on the bed, and gave way to the grief that swelled her bosom. With the long train of tender remembrances that rushed upon her mind, the image of her aunt mingled, as lovely, even in the awful habiliments of the grave; she had here slept the sleep of death, and she exclaimed in a tone of anguish,

"Yes ! I have indeed lost thee ! Dear, affectionate, exalted guide of my youth, I can never, never more hear from thy lips the language of instruction, of goodness, of blessing ! Never again shall I see the benignant smile that lighted up thy mild features—I can now never more make thee even the feeble return my heart delighted to offer ! Oh, never, never ; yes," she exclaimed, suddenly starting from the bed, "yes, one return I can make ! I will cherish the remembrance of thy virtues as a light to lighten my paths ; I will remember thy precepts, thy admonitions ; and if the mysterious tie that linked thee with mortality be not for ever broken, thy beatified spirit shall receive a gleam of higher happiness from witnessing the struggles of thy child to resemble thee."

Tears impeded further utterance, but the throbbings of her heart seemed assuaged by these ardent aspirations, and with something like tranquillity she slowly quitted the room to prepare for her journey.

The arrangements were soon completed, and after having taken a sorrowful farewell of the two domestics who remained to welcome the arrival of the new possessor of the cottage, she ordered the carriage to drive slowly round the little plantation, that she might without restraint bid a last adieu to the village which appeared to her invested with the beauties of Eden.

Her only attendant, an esteemed servant of the late Mrs. Beauclerc's, seemed very unwilling to allow her this indulgence; but Felicia, waving her hand with gentle firmness, intimated that she would be obeyed, and saying she should rejoin her at the extremity of Leominster, commenced her melancholy walk.

It was long ere her trembling hand gained strength to open the little gate that, when closed, would shut her out for ever from the peaceful domain which had been the seat of all her earthly happiness, and she lingered in its narrow portal till her sobs became painfully audible even to herself. She then burst from the enchantment that seemed to bind her to this hallowed spot, and, without daring to look back, flew along the path till she reached the well-known point where, shrouded in trees, it faded from her view. She paused, and turned on its modest beauties the glistening eyes of fond affection and unbounded admiration.

The clear serene azure of a summer's sky was streaked with long lines of glowing crimson, and the sun, robed in clouds of dazzling whiteness, threw a flood of mellow lustre over the eastern hills. Scarcely a breath of air disturbed the fringy lightness of the silvery birch, and the stillness of dawn was broken only by the cawing of the early rook.

All was calm repose and unruffled harmony around the mansion of her youth. The rich green velvet of its little lawn glittered in the dew of morning, and its transparent drops hung like diamond pendants on the honeysuckle that clustered in unrestrained luxuriance around the rustic porch.

It is a distinguishing feature in the mind of man, that blessings, while in possession, are never sufficiently estimated; but, when gone, they are invested by capricious fancy with undue importance. It is in the winter only we know how to appreciate the beauties of summer: and we must have felt the pains of sickness, the unkindness of the world, ere we can be sensible of the value of health or the consolations of friendship. When dark clouds overspread the face of Heaven, and the chastening hand of a watchful Providence robs us of those unnumbered blessings which we had received without gratitude and enjoyed without pleasure, we then look back on our former state with envy and regret; and through the long vista of life we perceive no pleasures to compensate for those we have lost. Oh, let us rather learn to estimate the mercies we still possess, than impatiently lament those we can no longer call ours!

Never, even to Felicia, had the seat of her girlhood appeared so lovely as now, and many minutes elapsed ere she had power

to tear her streaming eyes from the fascinating landscape. With lingering steps she pursued her lonely way, and crossed for the last time the rural bridge that led to the churchyard. There she paused : she feared to encourage feelings that might seem to militate against the wisdom that had appointed their separation.

A broad but shallow stream, whose transparent waters revealed its pebbly bed, gently murmured at her feet, and reflected on its placid bosom the shadowy branches of its sheltering trees. The Gothic tower of the village church, its airy pinnacles, grey with the moss of ages, rose in silent grandeur to the eye, and formed a striking contrast to the profusion of lowly cottages peeping through the trees that more than half obscured them : while the wide-extended landscape beyond was intersected by thick hedges of hawthorn, whose dark green leaves and snowy blossoms mingled in picturesque variety with the rosy buds of the dog-rose, just beginning to expand their silky petals. Every object was familiar to her eye as the features of an early friend. How often had she contemplated them with that friend lost for ever ! She dwelt on the scene with profound melancholy till the sun, suddenly emerging from behind a fleecy cloud, poured warm rays of golden lustre through the peaceful valley, and lit up the chancel window beneath which that friend now reposed. To Felicia's tearful eye it assumed the form of a glory. She was still gazing wistfully on this hallowed spot, when the sound of wheels warned her that the carriage had reached the grassy lane leading from the church to the turnpike-road. It stopped — she tore herself weeping away — and soon the last boundary of the village was left far behind.

Her companion, whose long residence in the family authorised her to the use of many little freedoms, sought to assuage her grief by picturing the delights which awaited her in the splendid region to which she was hastening ; but these, though mingled with many homely consolations and moralising remarks, were lost with her voice to the ear of her young mistress, till at a turning of the road one word amid the torrent of eloquence caught her ear. She started, and a few moments afterwards a handsome, elegant young man, of about eight-and-twenty, rode up to the carriage. He motioned for it to stop ; and, flinging open the door, said in a pleasing voice,

“ You parted from me, dear Felicia, yesterday ; but I did not part from you. I knew a little early rising, and an hour's ride, would bring me on your road ; and behind that clump of trees I have been waiting your arrival some time.” Felicia bowed her head in grateful acknowledgment — her deepening colour and sweet smiles speaking for her. “ And here,” he resumed, disengaging from his saddle-bow a small fancy basket, “ are the very first fruits of *our* this summer's hothouse.”

The emphasis on *our* brought a tear of tender pleasure into Felicia's eyes, and as it sparkled and trembled between the long

silken lashes, Mr. Evanmore saw that his attentions were fully appreciated, and his attachment fully reciprocated.

"Farewell, dearest " he said in a low tone, after Felicia had promised to write, if possible, the day she reached town, "we shall soon meet to part no more, till then — Fare-thee-well !"

Such were his last words as the carriage moved on, but he continued to kiss his hand whilst it remained in sight.

Reader ! do you know the delight of wide-awake dreaming ? It is a thousand times more exquisite than any in the slumbers of night. No strange inconsistencies — no sudden starts — no incongruous mingling up of the beautiful and the frightful — the awful dead and the joyous living — breaks the rosy link between romance and reality. Felicia was intensely sensitive, and the sensitive are peculiarly prone to indulge in this dangerous amusement. So she threw herself back in her aunt's well-cushioned, well-padded travelling chariot, and having nothing for the body to do, allowed her imagination to roam backward and forward — now to the scenes of her childhood — then to the blissful future, when she should be mistress of Mr. Evanmore's family residence. The one pervading subject, however, of her reverie was the meeting with her sister.

Rosalind Leycester was nearly two years her junior ; and, during their mother's lingering illness, when corporeal weakness, and weaker spirits, rendered her often unable to see them for more than very short periods in the day, Felicia became a kind of protectress to her little sister, watching over her with a mother's solicitude — imparting her own slender stock of infant erudition ; and never did she feel happier and prouder than when the pale mother, gazing with melancholy delight on the lovely child, praised her for the care she bestowed on "dear little darling Rosa," the miniature portrait of "poor, poor, lost papa." She taught her to arrange the tiny *bouquet* of fresh flowers laid daily on mamma's pillow, and not unfrequently the little sash and curly head were decorated with some of the sweetest of mamma's favourite flowers. She learnt to consider the admiration bestowed on Rosalind a compliment to herself, and Rosalind, wild and wilful, repaid her love by being more obedient to her than to any one else. They realised Shakspeare's exquisite vision of girlish fondness and friendship — "they slept together — ate together — sang together — grew together, like to a double cherry seeming parted, but yet a union in partition, two lovely berries moulded on one stem."

Mrs. Leycester's sorrow and illness forbade juvenile visiting — they were all in all to each other, and their separation on her demise so painful to each, that for some months both aunts were in despair. Rosalind sooner conquered her grief ; the novelty and gaiety of her residence in London lent their aids : Felicia, too, was with a relative who taught her to subdue unavailing regrets from Christian motives, but she continued to feel their

estrangement most sensibly, and to this early trial might perhaps be traced a shade of thoughtfulness even in her girlhood. At first they corresponded pretty regularly, and once Rosalind was permitted to spend a few weeks with Mrs. Beauclerc, when all their sisterly affection revived. They had not now met for several years; Mrs. Beauclerc refusing to allow Felicia to visit her sister in return, Lady Wyedale stood upon *etiquette*, and as much as possible repressed all further intercourse. Rosalind's letters grew shorter and more general, till the death of Mrs. Beauclerc, when she replied to Felicia's communication of the event with every expression of sympathy and attachment. But although thus estranged, Felicia had often heard of Rosalind's beauty and accomplishments from mutual acquaintances. She had been introduced very early into society, and fame ascribed to her a host of worshippers.

A sweet summer's day was thus pleasantly passed in the chimeras of the imagination; and about five o'clock, when she drew near the termination of her journey, she pictured to herself the melancholy pleasure with which her aunt would receive another child of her best-loved brother, and the unbounded joy of Rosalind. She saw her radiant in youthful beauty sitting at the window watching for the appearance of the carriage, her work or pencil dropping from her hand at the sound of every rolling wheel, her eye sparkling with delight—and her own became humid as, with secret happiness, she thought over her parting with Evanmore, and that she should soon have a home to offer "darling Rosa" if Lady Wyedale, whose health appeared decaying, might die before she had found any one worthy of her hand.

At length the carriage drove into the crowded streets of London, and Felicia for the first time was in the metropolis of England. But its splendour, its gaiety, its bustle, was unnoticed by her. The wondering exclamations of her companion were equally unheeded—one idea alone occupied her mind—one image alone flitted before her eyes. She was on the point of being clasped in the arms of her sister—and when the carriage stopped at the door of an elegant residence in Portman Square, her heart palpitated with such violence, that she could scarcely alight without assistance.

Two footmen in superb liveries conducted her up a spacious flight of stairs into a magnificent drawing-room.

"Rosalind!" she cried in a low voice, as she sprung forwards.

"My lady and Miss Leycester are from home, ma'am," said one of the attendants, placing her a chair; "they will not, I believe, be long absent. They were obliged to attend a china auction."

Felicia did not reply. An icy hand seemed to chill the warm current of her blood, and she sunk breathless on a sofa.

CHAP. V.

"Is all the counsel that we two have shared,
The sister's vows, the hours that we have spent,
When we have chid the hasty-footed time
For parting us,—Oh, and is all forgot?" SHAKESPEARE.

THE sudden shock which Felicia had received from the apparent indifference of her aunt and sister, kept her in a state of undefined yet painful emotion till the entrance of the housekeeper. She came in to apologise for their absence, and offer her refreshments. A little reassured by her declaration, that necessity obliged them to leave the house at such a period, she followed her to the apartment destined for her use, and, after taking a cup of chocolate, tried to reason herself once more into the same blissful visions which had been so rapidly put to flight.

"I must not expect from all the world the same wakeful attachment, the same marks of flattering affection, that the fondness of my dear aunt lavished upon me. My feelings are too acute. Often has she warned me against indulging that trembling sensibility to which she feared I was subject." And after inflicting this mental censure, she surveyed the lofty drawing-room with blended feelings of admiration and astonishment.

The walls were hung with costly paintings; and all that affluence could command, or luxury invent, seemed exhausted. The sweetest perfumes breathed from the flowers that filled the profusion of magnificent china vases. Indian cabinets and inlaid tables were scattered around in rich disorder: all, indeed, that refined taste, capricious fancy, or boundless wealth could desire, seemed collected into this superb apartment. The *coup d'œil* was strikingly elegant; but Felicia's eyes wandered from one splendid object to another, rather with curiosity than pleasure, and she soon averted them, to gaze with more interest on a gilded harp which her heart claimed as Rosalind's. She eagerly walked up to it. Several pieces of music were lying on a rosewood stand by the instrument. She took up a French song with an emotion indescribable, and pressed it to her lips. "Rosalind," she was articulating, when her eye glancing over the words, it fell from her fingers with a blush of shame and regret.

"These cannot be the sentiments of Rosalind!" said she, throwing it from her. "Oh, no! it has been sent to her by mistake, and she has never seen it." Alas! Felicia knew not that graceful language, and sweet melodies are too often deemed apologies for defective morality. She had been early taught to view disguised indelicacy and sophistical precepts with more alarm and indignation than open vice or avowed infidelity; for Mrs. Beauclerc possessed a deep knowledge of human nature, and was aware that the latter can only be prejudicial to the wicked, while the pure mind, which would turn with blushing

disgust from the one, may have the down of innocence brushed off by the other without being conscious of the injury.

From these somewhat displeasing reflections her attention was suddenly arrested by the portrait of an officer in uniform, and the strong resemblance its manly features bore to those of Rosalind, when they last parted, convinced her she saw the picture of her father. Again every former feeling revived, and, turning from the living canvas, she seated herself at one of the balconied windows in breathless impatience. Her heart beat high at the sound of every passing carriage, and when at length a chariot stopped at the door, she rushed from the window, and flew towards the staircase.

"Dearest Rosalind," she cried, "oh, how long I have thought you!" She had scarcely finished this ardent apostrophe, when she saw, not Rosalind, but a tall elegant young man, whose finely-formed features were expressive of little less surprise than her own. Mortified and ashamed, she hastily drew back, while the stranger, bowing with graceful ease, followed her into the drawing-room.

"I presume I have the honour of seeing Miss Leycester," said he, respectfully approaching her:—she bowed. "Miss Rosalind is not very punctual in the performance of her engagements," said he, drawing himself a chair, with the air of one who felt himself at home; "and a china auction is, I know, a scene of such temptation to her, that I should not wonder if she were entirely to forget an appointment to walk with me in the park."

Once more Felicia felt the same indefinite, yet displeasing sensation. "Surely it was strange Rosalind should make so many engagements on the day she was expected from Leominster?" She had no time to pursue these meditations; a carriage stopped suddenly at the door—a tremendous rap again made the warm blood circle round her heart—a light foot tripped up the staircase—the door was hastily thrown wide open—a lovely sylph-like figure bounded in—a moment more, and Rosalind was locked in her arms. She breathed quick; a thousand tender recollections rushed to her remembrance, and glad tears were springing to her eyes as she imprinted again and again fond kisses on the polished cheek of her sister, when Rosalind gently pushed her back, exclaiming as she glanced over her face and form,

"Why, Felicia, you are so much improved, I should be quite jealous of you if," lowering her voice, "you were not already a matron in embryo. Give me leave to introduce you to my aunt Lady Wyedale," she continued, seizing Felicia's arm, and leading her up to an elderly lady advancing with measured steps towards them; and then turning away, she addressed herself to the gentleman who was waiting her arrival. "I fear I have made you wait, Lord Edgermond, but we could not tear ourselves away before. There was the most divine assemblage of jars, vases, mandarins, &c. &c.; nothing, indeed, but the recollection that

my sister would probably be waiting our return, could have impelled me to leave the scene of attraction."

"Then I am to have the *happiness* of inferring that your return was not at all accelerated by the idea that *I* also was likely to be in the same situation. Your engagement to walk in the park, was, it seems, entirely forgotten."

"Entirely—never once thought of," said she, with an assumed, yet playful carelessness, that contradicted the assertion.

There was something in Rosalind's gaiety of manner, and in the whole of her reception, that involuntarily chilled the first ardour of a heart like Felicia's, alive to the finest touches of feeling, and disposed at such a moment to expand with unusual energy. But Felicia had been for years so accustomed to invest her sister with all the attributes of earthly perfection, and picture her such as she wished her to be, that she could not tear the delusion from her senses. Her heart also was warm and unsuspecting; and though the *beau-ideal*, which she had so long been embodying, had faded away, still the buoyancy of a youthful mind soon surmounted the temporary uneasiness which had attended their first meeting; and while Rosalind continued her sportive dialogue with his lordship, she forgot her transient mortification in listening to her animated conversation, and contemplating the exceeding loveliness of her form and features.

The sprightly girl of ten or eleven, with golden hair carelessly waving over her open brows, swan-like neck, and eyes sparkling with youth and innocence, was now transformed into the finished model of feminine beauty. Health bloomed on her polished cheek, joy illumined each speaking feature, while the rich luxuriance of her light shining hair, as it clustered in native curls on her snowy forehead, admirably contrasted with the dark lustre of her eyes and mourning robe.

"Will you accompany us to the park, my dear Felicia?" said Rosalind, suddenly turning from Lord Edgermond. "I believe I must fulfil my promise, as his lordship will not release me from it, and there is still time for a short walk before dinner."

For a moment Felicia hesitated; it was painful to be separated an instant from her sister, but a glance at Lord Edgermond's face betrayed he could dispense with her society. "He is her lover!" thought she, and she immediately declined the invitation.

When Rosalind's departure allowed her leisure to turn from the pleasing investigation of her captivating person, Felicia reviewed Lady Wyedale with new interest, and again repeated her sense of her ladyship's kindness in affording her a shelter under her roof. The chain of feeling, which had been broken by Rosalind's vivacity, reunited, and tears gushed from her eyes while assuring her aunt she should now bestow on her and her sister that attachment which had hitherto been exclusively devoted to her first friend.

Lady Wyedale, whose reception had been of the stateliest kind,

seemed to view her emotion with something like surprise, and received her protestations of affection with considerable coolness; but Felicia was too assured of her love to distrust it, and too well remembered her former self-reproach to be disappointed at its not being expressed in the same energetic language in which she had clothed her own sentiments; or accompanied by that sincerity of manner which so eminently distinguished Mrs. Beauclerc.

Lady Wyedale appeared between fifty and sixty; her stature was low, and her figure slight, even to spareness. Her features bore the unmistakeable stamp of the beauty, that at seventeen had obtained for her an alliance much beyond her position in society. Her eye dark, quick, and penetrating, announced intellect, but betrayed at the same time a spirit restless, irritable, haughty, and vindictive. The acute lineaments of her face were sometimes relieved by a smile, but it was one of mingled import; and in defiance of her wish to love and esteem her aunt, ere their *tête-à-tête* ended, Felicia, with a half-suppressed sigh, permitted herself to apprehend she would never supply the place of Mrs. Beauclerc's kindness. She was not, however, disposed, on making this unpleasing observation, to believe her ladyship must necessarily be very unamiable, or herself necessarily very miserable while her guest. She thought it natural an aunt from whom she had been so long estranged might not view her with any very strong feelings of regard; and certain that her residence with her could be but very short, felt resolved to endure with patience any little storms of temper to which she might be exposed.

In Rosalind she felt she should be amply repaid for any disappointment she might experience in her aunt, and with renovated spirits she welcomed her return from her walk. Lord Edgermond was still her companion, and in Rosalind's heightened gaiety, as she announced that he would dine with them *en famille*, she saw a confirmation of her surmise that he was a favoured admirer, if not the accepted lover of her sister.

Lady Wyedale's evident approbation of his attentions she believed was the guarantee of his worth; and she scrutinised his personal claims to Rosalind's attachment, with that sort of interest we usually bestow on those whom circumstances have determined us to like.

His lordship had not yet attained his twenty-seventh year: his features were handsome, his conversation animated, if not particularly brilliant, and his manners had that high polish which announces, yet more decidedly than a title, that the possessor is accustomed to move in the elevated circles of a court. He had, in short, all that exterior grace and refinement which sometimes supplies mental deficiency, and often atones to the world for the want of intrinsic worth—all that lightness and gallantry, that self-possession and freedom of address, which, while it borders on well-bred assurance, is pardoned as emanating from polite

condescension, or a generous open disposition; and Felicia, predetermined to approve of Rosalind's selection, speedily endowed him with those virtues she wished him to possess.

CHAP. VI.

"Ah! who has power to say
To-morrow's sun shall warmer glow,
And o'er this gloomy vale of woe
Diffuse a brighter ray?"

"Ah! who is ever sure,
Though all that can the soul delight,
This hour enchants the wond'ring sight,
These raptures will endure?"

WHEN she retired for the night, she found Jenny, in her new capacity of waiting-woman, already in her apartment, busied in preparing her night things, and placing her clothes in the drawers.

"You feel very strange like, don't you ma'am?" said she, as Felicia began to undress. "I've a notion, I shan't be over comfortable with all that pack of sliving fellows below stairs, for a good bit to come; and cliver as they seem to be, to my mind they've no notion of manners or good breeding. I can't say I think it over and above civil to grin in a body's face, when they're strange like, nobody knows for what, but just because one is not used to all their fine ways. You must know, Miss Felicia," she continued, without allowing Felicia time to inquire her reasons for this preamble, had she been so disposed, "to show my goodwill, I said to the chambermaid, you needn't, says I, Mrs. Martha (for all the servants are Mesters and Mistresses here), be at no manner of trouble concerning Miss Felicia's room, for I'll make the windows and doors. Will you, says they? and set up a horse-laugh. Why, are you a carpenter, Mrs. Jane? none but carpenters make windows and doors here. And all this scare it seems was, because I said *make* instead o' *fasten*; and there did I stare like a fool to see them make game on me till I took mysen off, none so well pleased, I'll assure you."

Felicia felt a little uneasy at this trifling circumstance, fearing it might be ominous of future disagreements; and ere she dismissed Jenny to rest, she desired her to keep as much as possible out of the servants' hall, and be as sparing of her conversation as she well could, till more acquainted with their habits and characters.

Jenny promised obedience, in a tone that bespoke she would equally consult her own feelings, and her mistress's, by distant civility; and Felicia, half apprehensive that the rustic appearance and strong accent of her humble friend might operate to her disadvantage, resolved to secure for her the good opinion and

countenance of her sister. She was aware that Jenny, though a very sensible and shrewd woman, was not without those peculiarities of manner and idiom which might be likely to excite the ridicule of her present fashionable colleagues, and that, though inclined to all that is good, she had a quickness of feeling that rendered her rather too sensible of slight offences, and possessed a keenness of retort that might very possibly lead to unpleasant dialogues in the servants' hall.

Lady Wyedale breakfasted in bed, and Felicia eagerly seized the opportunity to interest her sister in favour of the servant of her late aunt.

"My dear Rosalind," said she, as they sat down to the table, "I am going to bespeak your kindness and patronage for the companion of my journey. She is a most excellent woman, and after having faithfully discharged her duties to my poor aunt for thirteen years, was by her recommended to my protection. You will believe this has given her a thousand claims to my regard; but even without it, I must ever have considered her with almost affection, for she was a girl when I was an infant, and though eight or nine years older than myself, I still remember the time when I looked up to her with the fondness which we feel for a playfellow. I am sensible she is not without her faults, and that the dialect of her native county, Yorkshire, may sometimes afford room for risibility; but pray, my dear sister, exert your influence to check in her new associates whatever may tend to render her unhappy or displeased; for her chief failing is that irritability of temper, which, we are told, it is more difficult to overcome than to storm a city; and should her defects be too plainly pointed out to her, there will, I fear, be little harmony between her and the rest of the servants, which could not but be very unpleasant to my aunt."

"My maid told me last night she was a great quiz," returned Rosalind, laughing, "and I was anticipating some amusement from her jargon myself; but as you desire it, I will certainly endeavour to propitiate between them. Don't, however, make yourself uneasy about my aunt, she has too many quarrels of her own to render her a party in those of other people; and—oh, heavens! Lord Edgermond is here before I have had time to take off my *robe de chambre*. Felicia, you must entertain him—but remember Evanmore."

"I shall not be tempted to forget him," said Felicia, smiling, "even by Lord Edgermond."

"Oh, don't be too confident, for he is the 'glass of fashion, and the mould of form:' then he has *cet air distingué*, which confers ten thousand charms even upon a coronet."

She darted through an opposite door as his lordship entered, and Felicia, yet more assured of Rosalind's attachment to him, received him with augmented interest and regard.

Lord Edgermond was indeed well calculated to attract and please those who look not beyond personal accomplishments, and

those whose innate innocence renders them inclined to believe all virtuous till they are compelled to see they are guilty. He possessed many of the fashionable acquirements of the day ; had considerable knowledge of life, and sufficient *tact* to discover with ease the prevailing foibles of his acquaintance. He had also that insinuating and flattering address which is so peculiarly fascinating to women ; and his male friends pronounced him to have the best heart in the world ; for he was seldom unnecessarily cruel to his dogs, horses, or dependents : betted when he had small chance of winning ; lost his money without a frown, and had never been known to refuse a loan to those of his acquaintance to whom Plutus had been less propitious than himself. For the rest—it was nothing to them—nor in truth had they principle enough to perceive his want of it.

Such was the man on whom it appeared evident that the affections of Rosalind Leycester were bestowed ; and unsuspecting of his real character, Felicia saw her attachment not only without apprehension, but with delight ; for she had already determined that he must be amiable, or Rosalind would not have given him her heart ; and in his lordship's frequent visits, continual attentions, and half-whispered compliments, she saw her sister's love amply returned.

"I presume you are intimate with Mrs. Berkely ?" said Felicia, a few days after her arrival, taking as she spoke a sealed letter from her *escritoire*.

"Oh, no ! merely acquainted," replied Rosalind.

"I thought she resided within two or three miles of Lady Wyedale's country seat ; and I have a letter from my dear aunt Beaucherc, written almost in her last moments, which she charged me to deliver personally as soon as I had the opportunity. They were in early life particularly intimate ; and, though separated during a long series of years, my aunt always retained a most lively regard for her. I understood Lady Wyedale and she had also been old friends."

"They have long known each other, certainly ; but that does not prove they must be friends. There may be intimacy without either confidence or esteem :—believe me, it does not necessarily produce that which sentimental damsels call kindred souls, and of this truth Lady Wyedale and Mrs. Berkely are striking instances ; for the oftener they meet, the less they appear to like each other. With them, in direct contradiction to its philosophical effect, increased coldness seems, as a matter of course, to follow collision."

"I am concerned to hear it. — What can be the occasion of their coolness ?"

"Why this is the simple fact : Mrs. Berkely is one of those astonishingly good people whom inferior mortals always view with mingled emotions of admiration, fear, and dislike. Lady Wyedale will not, indeed, own to any sentiment beyond antipathy ; but her little person is usually in such a state of restlessness, and

her irritable brow so cowed in her presence, that I see she never feels quite at ease till out of it."

"Then I fear my aunt will be averse to my visiting her?" said Felicia, to whom this hurried sketch of Mrs. Berkely had conveyed no unfavourable impression.

"No, I don't imagine she will care much about it. Besides, out of my sisterly regard, I will give you one little caution: if you try to please her you will be sure not to succeed. She is one of those variable, capricious beings who are incensed at any want of respect, and yet abhor those who tamely yield to their humours. Sometimes, when I have a great point to carry, I deign to coax; but never, unless I see absolute necessity for such condescension, which is not often the case. There are characters, and Lady Wyedale is one, with whom it is generally better policy to play the braggadocio than the suppliant. You have likewise so good a plea that you have no necessity to consult her on the subject. Therefore simply ask for the carriage, and go; for Mrs. Berkely fortunately happens to be in town. One of the young cygnets, her daughter, who is labouring under some pulmonary complaint, is here for the benefit of medical advice, and they are all with her in lodgings. By-the-bye, I ought to give you some idea of the Misses Berkely, who are three of the most demure, prettiest behaved young ladies in the United Kingdom, not forgetting the *nonpareil* of the family, John Berkely, and his attendant satellite in the shape of an unfortunate younger brother. *Apropos*, you must tell me what you think of John Berkely when you return, for once he was a sort of a Corydon of mine; but as another proof that intimacy does not always engender friendship, intercourse seemed to weaken our regard. I found him too good for me, and I dare say he discovered I was not good enough for him; so, after sentimentalising, and playing about the flame, we each took wing, and flew away, with pinions unsinged. What I could ever see in the man is now my wonder; for he is downright ugly — nothing decent about him but his two eyes, and their attraction lies neither in colour nor form. Then he is such a philosopher, that even at the very time I thought myself most secure of my conquest, I do not remember he ever said a single civil thing to me."

"As you think Lady Wyedale will not be displeased, go with me."

"Go with you! — no, not for the world. While I had Berkely in view, I did occasionally contrive to drag on half an hour with them; but even then it was quite a task to get over the time, and of course I never afterwards voluntarily incurred such a bore. Besides, I detest any thing in the shape of a *scène*, and you must be sensible the delivery of such a letter cannot fail to be attended with one, especially as the person receiving it is dear, good Mrs. Berkely, whom I have often suspected to be a near relative of the *larmoyante* nymph so celebrated in times of old.

Therefore, *bon jour, ma très chère sœur*, and be satisfied with seeing four Niobes in Mrs. Berkely and her daughters, without adding a fifth in your own person; for we are to have Lord Edgermond and a party in the evening, and I should wish *les graces et les ris* to attend your steps, even though your charms may rob me of the brightest jewel in my crown."

"Do not be alarmed," said Felicia smiling; "it would not be in my power to eclipse Rosalind Leycester, even should I wish to be her rival; and, as you reminded me the first hour we met, I am already a married woman in embryo."

Rosalind's cheek became flushed with transport; and the kiss with which she repaid the compliment, evinced she was neither insensible to the sweets of flattery, nor that this tribute to her charms had diminished her sisterly regard for its author.

Felicia had, in truth, no pretension to vie with Rosalind for the palm of beauty. Her features were analogous to her mind, gentle, insinuating, intelligent, and lovely, but boasted not the perfection that distinguished her sister's, and, unlike hers, generally pleased more as they became more familiar to the eye.

The hint Rosalind had given of Lady Wyedale's temper, so well agreed with her own preconceived opinion, that Felicia confined herself to announcing she had a letter to convey to Mrs. Berkely, and accompanied the information by a request that she might be permitted to order the carriage for the purpose of waiting upon her.

Lady Wyedale was evidently provoked; but as she gave a sulky assent, Felicia readily overlooked the incivility in the permission, and the next morning set off for the residence of her aunt's friend.

Mrs. Berkely was in lodgings a few miles from town; and as there was no carriage entrance, Felicia alighted at the gate of the garden in front, and on foot reached the mansion. The door was open, and a servant appeared before she had time to lift the knocker. He answered her inquiry for Mrs. Berkely by saying the family were all at home, and without further ceremony led her up stairs. As she approached the drawing-room, she caught the sound of a female voice particularly soft and musical, reading aloud; and when her conductor threw open the door of a large handsome apartment, she saw that it proceeded from a dignified elderly woman, dressed in mourning, whose gentle features well harmonised with the sweet tones she had heard. Three elegant-looking girls were seated by her at work; and writing at a table, near one of the windows, was a young man, in whose plain yet agreeable countenance, she felt assured she beheld John Berkely.

Mrs. Berkely hastily arose on hearing her name announced, and advanced to meet her with a smile of joy, grief, and interest, that evinced she was not wholly unprepared for this visit, or considered Felicia in the light of a stranger. She received Mrs. Beauclerc's letter with deep emotion; but it was betrayed only

by her changing complexion, and tremulous hand as she placed it on the table, for she evidently tried to conquer her agitation, and did not open it during Felicia's stay.

"I shall hope to know more of you, my dear Miss Leycester," said she, "when you accompany Lady Wyedale to the Lodge, which is only three miles from Elm Grove, and while you remain in town, shall be most happy to see you whenever you can find leisure to favour us with your company. But I do not press you to visit us here. London has many attractions for a young imagination; and we lead so retired a life, partly from inclination, and partly from the indisposition of my youngest daughter, that I should deem it almost selfish to request you to pass a day with us."

There was a something in Mrs. Berkely that involuntarily inspired respect in all who beheld her, while her mild manners and pleasing address seldom failed to excite attachment in those who were not determined to dislike her; and Felicia, prepared to love and esteem the friend of her aunt, felt every previous prepossession strengthened by acquaintance. She earnestly requested to be allowed to repeat her visit shortly; and, pleased with her apparent wish to cultivate her friendship, Mrs. Berkely readily named a day in the ensuing week.

"I shall consider myself still more favoured if your sister, Miss Rosalind, will accompany you, Miss Leycester," said Mrs. Berkely, as Felicia rose to depart. "A year or two ago she often indulged me with her society, and her vivacity inspired us all with additional cheerfulness; but lately she has seldom given us the pleasure of her company. And pray tell her John will be rejoiced to renew the playful contests and arguments which formerly used to afford us so much amusement."

Felicia stole a glance at Mr. Berkely while his mother was speaking, to see if he still retained that affection for Rosalind which she hinted he had once felt; but whatever might have been his sentiments, his tranquil brow, unflushed cheek, and careless indifference to what his mother was saying, announced he was entirely free from her chains; and when she recollected Rosalind's flippant manners, and disregard to the ceremonial of life, she could scarcely believe a man of his grave character and deportment could ever seriously have regarded her with attachment.

CHAP. VII.

"I never framed a wish, or formed a plan
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But thou wert there."

"SURELY, Rosalind, you will accompany me to Mrs. Berkely's to-day?" said Felicia on the morning of her intended visit.

"Who, I? Oh no, my dear; I consider such acts of immolation quite above my standard. No, no; you must, as I told you before, go to dear, good, sententious Mrs. Berkely's stitching-party by yourself. Don't look so disappointed—you must, by this time, have discovered I am not fit society for such paragons as the Berkelys. While I thought Berkely might have been converted into a reasonable man, I did not spare my company; but I found the thing hopeless, and I almost think that has partly given me such a distaste to your wonderfully pious, prudent folks. It is indeed a sad bore to be in the least intimate with them; for as 'every animal employs the note, or cry, or howl which is peculiar to its species,' they are sure to presume upon it to torment you with their unsolicited advice and *experience*, as they term all sort of hum-drum sleep-giving tales. Then it is so tiresome and provoking to those who are not of the fraternity, to hear them say, when I was young I never did so and so: or, young people in my day never would have thought of such a thing, &c. &c. Now one is not inclined to give them credit for so much perfection then, seeing they are so far from the goal now; or at least one cannot help grieving, that so much blossom should have produced so little fruit; and as it would be treason to appear sceptical, it is best not to run the risk of giving offence to them, or of losing one's own temper."

After this decided explanation of her sentiments, Felicia forbore to press Rosalind to accompany her. She had, indeed, as Rosalind imagined, seen, with surprise and concern, that she possessed a mind which bore little affinity to hers, and inclinations, pursuits, and opinions very different from those she assiduously cherished in her own bosom.

She was clever, witty, eloquent, and accomplished; full of affectionate impulses, and naturally well disposed. But she was hasty in temper, sarcastic and unscrupulous, and her conversation, when stripped of the charm of her person, and manner, and voice, consisted mainly of little more than highly drawn entertaining caricatures of her acquaintance—regrets that she had missed one amusement—descriptions of a past, or anticipations of a future, varied by perpetual arguments and polite *fracas* with her aunt.

Mrs. Berkely received her confused apologies for Rosalind's absence, with a manner that showed she both understood and could forgive the real motive. The conversation then took a different turn, and in the society of Mrs. Berkely and her family

Felicia spent the first uninterruptedly happy day she had passed for months. In vain she sought to discover in Rosalind's exaggerated description of the Berkely family any resemblance to the original. A shade of pensiveness at times interrupted the peaceful serenity on Mrs. Berkely's brow; but it seldom dwelt longer than a moment; and as she was a widow, and one of her daughters labouring under a painful indisposition, Felicia only wondered that she could enter with so much ease and cheerfulness into the pursuits and conversation of her children. The Misses Berkely, scarcely excepting the invalid, seemed gifted with little less animation than Rosalind herself; while Mr. Berkely, though naturally reserved in his manners, soon threw off his apparent distance, and gaily lent his aid to enliven the little party.

Felicia had believed, that when united to her sister, she should know no uneasiness but such as might arise from the tender regret with which she must ever regard the loss of Mrs. Beauclerc; and, when mixing in the polished society of Lady Wyedale, she should derive the highest gratification and improvement from the conversation which she should hear at her table; but a very little intercourse with Rosalind and her aunt dispelled the illusion, and some of the brilliant colours in which the sanguine imagination of a young and ardent mind decks an untried world, had already faded before her eyes. The great disappointment was encountered in a quarter where she had anticipated none—Rosalind! But while she could not disguise from her quick perception that this idol of her heart was very opposite to what she had fondly pictured her, no diminution of ardent attachment resulted from the painful discovery; indeed, rather the contrary; she ascribed her faults to an improper education, united to a light heart and volatile spirit. To love was subjoined a strong sense of pity. She became again the little darling Rosa of a by-gone period, to be watched over, and guided, and cherished, and her waywardness forgiven in the full and assured conviction that with added years would come knowledge of her errors, and their abandonment.

That openness, that sincerity of affection, that mutual confidence and mutual desire to please, which form the principal charm of domestic intercourse, and which seemed enjoyed in all its purity by the Berkelys, she had long vainly sought for under the roof of Lady Wyedale. There she had been taught, that good manners are not modified by the customs of any circle or place, nor politeness exclusively the attribute of high life, and speedily discovered that a Xantippe in a drawing-room is not much more distinguished for the graces than that vehement personage sometimes seen presiding at a fish-stall.

Lady Wyedale's spirit was so haughty, that to disagree with her in opinion was synonymous to an insult, and her manner so peremptory, that reason was usually lost in declamation. Her conversation was at times indicative of talent; but whenever her

passions or interest interfered with her judgment, her arguments became trifling and absurd.

In a snip-snap dialogue she was no mean performer; but Rosalind stood unrivalled. She excelled in *persiflage*, for her volatile fancy supplied her with a thousand retorts and innuendos, and she could throw an arch kind of simplicity into her face and tones at such periods, that rendered the keenness of her replies particularly exasperating to her antagonist, who generally kept the field till she found herself defeated, and then retreated under the authority of the aunt — the consequence of which was, that Rosalind felt equally assured of her victory, and enraged at the assumption of power in one who first voluntarily put herself on a level, and then insisted upon the superiority derived from her age and station.

Felicia had, at first, witnessed Rosalind's behaviour on these occasions with equal astonishment and displeasure; for not merely esteeming Mrs. Beauchamp as the best of women, and loving her as the kindest — but considering her as the guardian of her youth, she had ever preserved towards her the familiarity of a friend, mingled with the reverence due to a superior; and after she had perceived Lady Wyedale's total want of self-command, gentleness, and all the varied charms which inspire sentiments of respect, she still could not exonerate Rosalind from a heavy censure. But again it was softened by the recollection that she had not, like herself, been taught the duties of her situation by precept and example; and she regarded with increased admiration the undeviating piety, the inflexible integrity, the feminine virtues that graced the character of her first protectress.

Felicia came by appointment very early, but the dinner-bell rung ere she thought she had been an hour in the house.

"My dear Berkely!" said Mrs. Berkely, as they rose to descend into the eating-room.

Mr. Berkely put down the artificial flies he was busily employed in manufacturing, and while a blush suffused his manly face, advanced towards his youngest sister, and gently took her in his arms.

"My poor Maria has long been unable to walk up or down stairs," said Mrs. Berkely, taking Felicia's hand to lead her into the dining-room, "but her brother is so kind and constant an assistant, she says she scarcely knows how to repine at the deprivation."

Felicia involuntarily turned towards him a look expressive of her esteem. His sister's arms were clasped around his neck, and the silent kiss she imprinted on his cheek, as a tear stole from her downcast eyes, spoke more than volumes.

All the little offices which suffering nature requires, it is so manifestly the duty of woman to administer, that we see any negligence in their performance with disgust. In her, compassion seems scarcely a virtue, and we esteem the least apparent want

of it a crime for which we can offer no apology. But we view either its possession or its absence in the character of the sterner sex with very different emotions. In man we are not taught to expect all the nicer feelings of humanity, all those little tender attentions which sickness requires; and when we receive them from the hand of a father, husband, or brother, we prize them as jewels for which we can make no adequate return.

Felicia felt extremely affected, and as she viewed Mr. Berkely's anxious endeavours to avoid shaking his lovely burthen, the looks of fond solicitude with which he regarded her, she breathed a heartfelt sigh, that her beloved Rosalind had failed to secure the valuable affections of such a man.

Women soon become familiar. There is a similarity in their pursuits which naturally leads to intimacy; and when there is also a coincidence in their sentiments, friendship rapidly follows acquaintance. Each succeeding moment seemed to strengthen her attachment to the family, while the maternal kindness of Mrs. Berkely's manner, and the affectionate freedom of her daughters, evinced that she was no less warmly esteemed by them.

Felicia was not, indeed, like Rosalind, a finished belle, but she had *les graces encore plus belles que la beauté*. She had also that diffidence of manner, which Mrs. Berkely knew is often found to veil a superior mind and cultivated understanding; and she almost regretted that the approaching union of her young favourite, which she had learnt from Mrs. Beaucherc's letter, would, in all human probability, separate them for ever in this world.

It was late when Felicia at length reluctantly tore herself away, and then only after having promised to repeat her visit very shortly.

The breakfast equipage had scarcely been taken away the morning afterwards, and she was endeavouring to remove Rosalind's prejudices against her friends, when the rap of consequence made them start. Rosalind flew to the window, and as she peeped through the Venetian blinds exclaimed,

"Oh, heavens! what shall we do? Why, that most insufferable of all insufferables, Mrs. Hustleton, is at the door—I will not admit her, I am determined. She is come on purpose to overwhelm you with questions; and after gratifying her own horrid curiosity, she will run all over the town with her intelligence: for she is a sort of news-providing jackal to half-a-dozen fashionables, who merely tolerate her as such. But perhaps we had best brave her at once—she will find some means of satisfying herself after all—it is a rainy morning—I don't think Lord Edgermond will call, and she might chance to come when she would be even less agreeable than now, for she is as mischievous and malicious as a monkey."

At this moment a footman entered, to *know if she would be at home?*

"Why, yes," in a tone of mortification; "you may as well

let her in. Felicia," she continued, "if you don't play *personnage muet*, I will never forgive you. She will endeavour to come over you in fifty different ways, and pretend to have been the intimate friend of my aunt Beauclerc, partly to draw you on, and partly to gratify her own vanity, though she was, I dare say, never half-a-dozen times in her company: but don't be deluded."

A low displeasing-looking woman, with a cringing smile on her lips, now entered the room.

"My dear Miss Leycester," said she, taking Rosalind's motionless hand with the fawning manner of a spaniel, "how kind to receive me thus early! but indeed I deserve it; for as soon as I learnt Miss Leycester, your sister, was arrived, I felt impatient to pay my respects to her."

"I do not doubt it, ma'am," said Rosalind, in a tone that made Felicia start, while her smile was that of a person obliged by the compliment.

"May I beg to know which of my dear young friends I must term *Miss Leycester*. I am sorry to be so ignorant of those for whom I entertain so great a regard."

"My sister is the eldest," said Rosalind, forgetful, in her desire to be young, that she had answered the first question of her impertinent visitor.

"I only learnt your arrival last night, my dear madam," addressing Felicia, "and it was an unexpected pleasure, I assure you, for your aunt did not, I believe, hope for your society so soon. I trust you are recovered from the fatigue of your journey."

An arch sidelong look from Rosalind informed Felicia that she had, anticipating this visit, contrived to deceive Mrs. Hustleton as to the period of her leaving Leominster; and with some hesitation she said she had been in town nearly three weeks.

Mrs. Hustleton appeared petrified. "Three weeks! really I am surprised—Miss Rosalind—you——"

"The exact time of my sister's visit was uncertain," replied Rosalind coolly, "and I did not permit myself to anticipate her appearance, lest I should incur a disappointment."

Mrs. Hustleton looked rather sceptical, but she had some great points to achieve; and suppressing her angry suspicions, she turned to Felicia. "Were you ever in London before, my dear Miss Leycester?"

This was so direct and harmless an interrogation, that Felicia readily replied in the negative.

"What a delightful scene it will be to you, when you can so far forget my respected old friend, Mrs. Beauclerc, as to enter into its gaieties," said she with a whine. "Perhaps, my dear young lady," she continued, edging her chair a little nearer to Felicia, "you do not remember to have heard your aunt mention me?"

"No," said Rosalind, with easy self-possession. "Felicia has

just been telling me my aunt Beauclerc never alluded to your having met."

"Indeed—Ah! it is so many years since I had the pleasure of her friendship, I am not surprised."

She looked, however, mortified, and some minutes elapsed before she had sufficiently recovered from this unwelcome reply to resume the conversation with spirit.

"Your aunt, Miss Leycester, I dare say had almost entirely relinquished society for many years before her illness. She was always inclined to be grave."

"Oh no," said Rosalind, "on the contrary, she was distinguished for her cheerfulness, and had a numerous circle of acquaintance."

"Doubtless; I remember she was always lively in her disposition; I merely meant to say, that my old friend probably declined the amusements of the world as she verged towards its close."

"My aunt seldom partook of what are usually termed the amusements of the world," said Felicia.

An approving glance from Rosalind was the reward of her dexterity in evading a direct reply.

"I think the largest portion of Mrs. Beauclerc's fortune was entailed on the male representative of the family, whom I have long had the honour of knowing."

"Then you are more fortunate than ourselves. Lord Beauclerc is a stranger to us," said Rosalind, who was constantly on the alert to parry her attacks, or answer them with information to which she was already privy.

"Was my esteemed friend aware of the dangerous tendency of her complaint, dear Miss Leycester?"

Felicia coldly bowed.

"Long enough to make all those little preparations which are so necessary—yet so awful?"

Felicia turned from her inquisitive gaze with ill-dissembled displeasure.

"You will excuse my saying these topics are a little distressing to my sister—you know my aunt Beauclerc was to her a mother," said Rosalind, with a glowing cheek.

"A thousand pardons, my dear Miss Leycester. I lament that my natural desire to hear every particular respecting the friend of my youth should have tended to wound your sensibility. I know she was indeed a parent to you, and pardon me if my anxiety should have betrayed me into anything like indelicacy. From a near relative I learnt her indisposition was one that does not rob us of the opportunity of fulfilling our last wishes; and the deep interest I take in whatever concerns my dear Lady Wyedale's family must be my apology, if there be any impropriety in expressing my unfeigned hope that she did indeed regard you, my dear madam, as her adopted daughter."

Her eye wandered from Felicia's face to Rosalind's, then back

again to Felicia's, but vainly; they remained silent, and not a feature betrayed the intelligence she was desirous of possessing.

An acquaintance newly commenced with a very distant branch of the Beauclerc family, who felt anxious to learn the particulars of Mrs. Honoria's will, determined her, however, not as yet to relinquish the attempt in despair; and by a masterly stroke of policy, she succeeded. "You, my dear Miss Rosalind, the acknowledged heiress of Lady Wyedale, she would not of course consider on such an occasion; and I am sure, you would not feel hurt at a line of conduct which the consciousness of your great expectations, not want of *affection*, alone impelled your aunt to adopt."

The desire of appearing independent absorbed Rosalind's prudence, and forgetful of her former resolution, she revealed that piece of intelligence which Mrs. Hustleton was most anxious to acquire. She was instantly sensible of her inadvertence, and would have wished to recall the past, or, by altering her first statement, a little disguise the truth. But she had no opportunity to effect her design.

Mrs. Hustleton had penetration enough to perceive it was not her intention, by protracting the conversation, to further enlighten her mind; and eager to communicate the important information she had collected, she resisted all Rosalind's invitations to prolong her call.

"When she opens her budget to take out what she has thus artfully drawn from me," said Rosalind, ere the door had well closed after her, "may all the plagues of Pandora fly after it! "You have cause to triumph over me, indeed, Felicia, for after all my cautions to you, and fears of your garrulity, I alone have betrayed what was of the *least* importance to be concealed. Well, I shall not long be in her debt; and yet, she is not a woman I would willingly offend, and from the same motive that influenced Justice Shallow to treat Sir John Falstaff's men well, "*because they were arrant knaves and would backbite.*" Low and despicable as she is, and almost universally detested, she has attached herself to half-a-dozen superior people whose gratitude is secured by her compliance with their whims; and is connected with half-a-dozen more by the still stronger ties of interest: for she has twelve or fifteen thousand pounds, to leave amongst twelve or fifteen avaricious cousins all equally related; and the hope of securing her better part hereafter, a lure artfully held out to each in succession, secures their countenance and opinion, though I verily believe there is not one of them who does not cordially detest her as I do."

"And why should she be the object of your aversion?"

"Why!"—because I never can see hypocrisy, malice, envy, and every other bad passion in full play, without indignation. Then her insolence, self-conceit, and vanity, are perpetually exciting one's disgust and displeasure. In addition to her other high crimes and misdemeanors, she is that most horribly tiresome

and disagreeable of all personages, a mighty clever, notable woman—a director-general, in short, of the affairs, conduct, and opinions of the whole world; and authorised, on the ground of her own superior understanding, to judge and condemn all criminals who happen to disagree with her, from matters of faith down to the tying of a shoe-string. Then everything belonging to her is superior in its kind. Her foreign wines have a flavour which no one's else possess; and must, therefore, have been made expressly for her. Her English, manufactured from receipts given her by some great acquaintance (who would not for the universe extend the favour to any other), though made *exactly* according to rule, nevertheless turn out so much better than any ever before tasted, that it can be nothing short of a miracle. Her cakes, fricassées, tea, coffee, all—all partake of this marvellous excellence. She has receipts that would make the fortunes of half the wine-merchants, wine-manufacturers, confectioners, cooks, gingerbread-makers and bakers in the kingdom, if she would only charitably impart them. All the books that should be read, she has read; all that should be acquired, or known, she has acquired, and does know. Then all her relations to the remotest degree of consanguinity (that is, acknowledged consanguinity), are handsome, accomplished, clever, genteel, well-born, affluent, and so forth. Now, if all this proceeded from a natural sweetness of disposition, a desire to view everything through a happy medium, a warmth of heart and sincerity of affection, that inclined her to invest all her friends with these attributes of fancied perfection, I could forgive it, and even love the weakness I despised. Knowing that it emanates from a haughty insolent spirit—that it is the fruit of pride and self love—I see her thus entranced by the vapours of her own consummate presumption with unmixed sensations of abhorrence. One of her many recommendations to the love of society is, that she is a sort of a ready-made anecdote-monger, and piques herself on knowing the marriages and intermarriages of every genteel family in the kingdom, with whom she also labours hard to make you believe she is on terms of intimacy; and with as much truth as the gentleman I just before quoted, Justice Shallow, when boasting of his familiarity with John of Gaunt, whom he never saw but once in a tilt-yard; and then received a broken head from him for crowding among the marshal's men. If you happen to say Mr. Ridewell's eye was knocked out whilst breaking in a horse, she begins with an important movement of her head, 'No ma'am, there you must excuse me; I have the pleasure of being intimately acquainted with the family, and I know from sources not in the possession of everybody, &c. &c. &c. And I assure you it occurred so and so.' But what of all things is most annoying, she every now and then assumes that smooth, condescending politeness, which a superior adopts to one of an inferior degree, when disposed to be amiable; while her conversation is distinguished by

a cool, yet decided confidence, which implies a superiority of information and situation, which admits of neither doubt nor appeal, for she has all the tenacious jealousy of importance common to a low-bred, conceited woman, and to question her supremacy is to incur her maledictions. This from one who was absolutely a tradeswoman,—yes, shopkeeper, till like Danaë, a shower of gold fell into her lap by an event nearly as wonderful. An old sundried Indian, dying just as he meant to enjoy the money he had spent his whole life in acquiring, left her two thousand pounds, as he supposed, devoting the residue to post-obit fame of some kind. Thanks to bad writing, bad composition, and the glorious uncertainty of the law, this salvo to his conscience for years of previous neglect, was interpreted into twenty thousand. And then, behold! she who had hitherto appeared as destitute of kindred as Melchisedek, might have exclaimed with Leah on the arrival of Gad—Lo, a troop! Cousins of all degrees of consanguinity started up, like the ghosts in Macbeth, each looking as anxious for acceptance and pardon as if they were convicted assassins. She forgave them—she knew she should have acted just as they did in their place: besides, she was willing to be received into the family circle—taking her revenge, however, by playing the despot in grand style ever afterwards. The magic wand which thus awes them into submission, is the hope of a legacy. To one and all this is held out as a lure to ensure their good behaviour; her female relations knit her, and net her mittens, and socks, and purses, and comforters; the male send her game, and the good things of the table; so the old woman lives in clover amongst them, giving nothing in return for their solid offerings to Mammon but the hint of ‘being remembered.’ Knowing as I do, that though she sometimes passes over an offence, but never pardons it, I should not be surprised if she left them all in the lurch at last, bestowing her better part on some humble crony in a back parlour, with whom she exchanged cups of tea behind their respective counters, unless indeed a certain young lawyer (not an ill-looking fellow either, for I have seen him, though I don’t know him), who is laying close siege to her goods and chattels, may wheedle her out of the whole. He has the advantage of closer propinquity than the rest of his competitors, and his calling to boot. Time will show—she was rather tottering last winter, and when she took to her umbrella under the plea of coming rain, but clearly for the support of its stick, their faces wore the same sort of subdued joy and deceitful solemnity that one sees in an undertaker’s, when heading a funeral procession.”

There was a something so artful, so sly, and so altogether unprepossessing in Mrs. Hustleton’s manner, that when Rosalind had finished this *catalogue raisonné* of her claims to the esteem and regard of her acquaintance, Felicia, though apprehensive she had a little tendency to deal in hyberbole, felt inclined to believe her animadversions were not altogether unfounded; and fearful

that her volatility laid her open to the malevolence of such a woman, she entreated her to disguise her dislike lest she might convert a disagreeable acquaintance into a dangerous enemy.

Rosalind heard her with a laugh, and promised obedience to her wishes. Between herself and Mrs. Hustleton there did indeed exist a sort of treaty, offensive and defensive; which each felt aware it was her interest not to interrupt by an open avowal of that heartfelt antipathy, which a series of petty acts of insolence on the one side, and impertinent speeches on the other, had engendered between them. Mrs. Hustleton had an instinctive apprehension, that Rosalind had somewhere learnt her former state and condition (a momentous secret), carefully hidden by herself and her relations, from the same personal motive; while Rosalind, in defiance of her usual disregard to consequences, was unwilling to have a complete rupture with a woman who visited, occasionally at least, in the best circles, and who had talent enough to second the malevolence of her temper.

CHAP. VIII.

"A fretful temper will divide
The closest knot that may be tied,
By ceaseless sharp corrosion;
A temper, passionate and fierce,
May suddenly your joys disperse
At one immense explosion."

COWPER.

LADY WYEDALE'S annual visit to her seat in Essex had been delayed long beyond the usual period, in consequence of a slight indisposition in the early part of the summer, which operating on a constitution too irritable to endure the least personal suffering with common patience, had at length become if not alarming, at least very distressing. Unaccustomed to submit to the least privation, or support the smallest inconvenience, her ladyship's native ill-humour was so much increased, that her attendants approached her with fear, while her associates fled from her with disgust. Even the presence of Mr. Evanmore, who was now in town, and a frequent visitor, could not restrain the ebullitions of her temper. He was not, indeed, a personage of sufficient importance in her eyes to render her at all desirous of conciliating his good opinion; for his connexions, though genteel, were by no means affluent, and his fortune she considered scarcely equal to the support of his station. As the accepted lover of Felicia she had at first seen him with dislike, but his mild gentlemanly manners, quiet attentions, and patient endurance of her caprices and complaints, at length gradually won upon her; and as a person always ready to listen to her various calamities, she began to

admiration ; and Rosalind, gratified by his applause, soon learnt to treat him with the easy familiarity of a brother.

Vanity was, indeed, Rosalind's besetting sin, and flirting her favourite employment. She was a practised coquette, and her prominent passion influenced every look, every motion, every expression. She was all things to all men : alternately bewitchingly soft, pensively sentimental, or sparkling with animation. She possessed many accomplishments, and excelled in all the little arts of ingenious idleness ; but to embellish her person was her chief study ; to attract, her principal aim.

Lady Wyedale was one of those narrow-minded, suspicious characters, who think their own personal safety lies in the disunion of all around them ; and that, to maintain their own power, they must prevent anything like confidence or real affection between the rest of their connexions. " Divide and govern," the favourite maxim of cold worldly policy, was her rule of conduct ; and, though she had no desire to see Rosalind and Felicia so much at variance, that it would either be unpleasant to live with them, or their quarrels become the topic of conversation among her acquaintance, she was determined to destroy anything like attachment on either side, lest it might lead to the downfall of her own consequence with both. She had a large fortune at her disposal ; and though she had not the slightest intention of leaving Felicia more than a few thousands, she was not unwilling to alarm Rosalind's security ; or to receive those personal attentions from both which are so gratifying to an ambitious, power-loving spirit. She therefore laboured hard, by hints and innuendos, to persuade Rosalind, that she would find her sister a sour, bigoted, artful woman ; ready to take every advantage of her thoughtlessness, and willing to ascribe the worst motives to her conduct. To Felicia she occasionally lamented, in broken sentences and half-breathed sighs, that Rosalind's beauty and desire of admiration, imprudence, and fascinating manners, made her a very dangerous friend to an engaged woman. These efforts were not, however, attended with all the success she could wish. Rosalind, at first disposed to regard Felicia with fear and coldness, soon learnt to forget many of the unfavourable impressions she had received, in Felicia's cheerful conversation, unassuming manners, and affectionate attentions. She remembered enough to make her insensible to Felicia's advice, and laugh at her principles ; but not sufficient to render her an object of secret dislike ; or extinguish the ardent affection she had in childhood felt for her. While Felicia, whose ready penetration enabled her to perceive Lady Wyedale's intention, and whose attachment to her sister rendered her blind to her faults, spurned from her mind, as injurious and uncharitable, every hint to her disadvantage, and continued to treat her with the fond warmth of one who could place all she esteemed precious, without hesitation, in her hands.

Artless, open, and confiding, she saw Rosalind's efforts to excite

the approbation of Evanmore, as those of a sister endeavouring to awaken the affections of a brother. No parity of manners, sentiments, or pursuits, she felt assured, could impel Rosalind towards Evanmore, and those arts of coquetry which she sometimes saw her practise, she ascribed, and justly, to a passion for universal admiration. Her heart she yet implicitly believed was in the possession of Lord Edgermond; but three months' acquaintance with his lordship had not tended to confirm her former opinion that he seriously returned her affection. She had vainly tried, through the brilliant gloss diffused by fashion over the manners and language of his lordship, to discover any sparklings of real attachment. He was still almost her shadow; still whispered in her ear; still assumed the air of one who loves; but he never seemed to advance a step in his attentions. He was the same yesterday as to-day; to-day the same as yesterday; and as he possessed, in Felicia's humble views, a princely fortune, she knew not why he should delay a declaration of his love, if it really dwelt in his bosom. She saw also that Rosalind was secretly disappointed at his cautious advance towards the temple of Hymen, though she carefully abstained from breathing her mortification.

A childish desire of universal conquest was, as Felicia rightly conjectured, the sole cause of Rosalind's attentions to Evanmore, and her heart more interested in Lord Edgermond's favour than that of any other. But the heart of a coquette is never in any great danger; and though the blind urchin may sometimes produce a little sensation, like that of feeling, the impression is neither very deep nor very lasting. Rosalind would as soon have thought of marrying a beggar as Evanmore; but it was not in her nature to be in his society, or that of any other gentleman, without trying the power of her spells. He was handsome, elegant, and good-humoured; and though, as she often told him, flirting with a sister's lover was heavy work, yet it was better than not flirting at all; and with this understanding between them, she continued to demand attentions, he to pay, and Felicia to witness them without apprehension.

London was now, to use the emphatic language of fashionable people, "a perfect desert—a complete wilderness." Lord Edgermond was gone with his family to Brighton, and Rosalind became suddenly convinced nothing would so much contribute to her aunt's restoration to health as a visit to the sea. Lady Wyedale had herself long been wavering between a desire to change her abode, and an indolent unwillingness to make the attempt; and she at length yielded to the unceasing arguments and entreaties of her favourite niece. In defiance of their frequent bickerings and clashings, Lady Wyedale really loved Rosalind, as much as her selfish heart was capable of loving anything. She decidedly resembled both Major Leycester and herself, who had been twins; and all that mysterious, yet strong and tender attachment which is supposed to exist between persons so singu-

larly united, had not been a little increased by their having each formed a connexion in life, which placed them far above the rest of their friends.

In Rosalind's exquisite beauty and captivating manners, she saw the newly-acquired consequence of her family perpetuated; and confident that she would form some splendid alliance, vanity, as well as affection, contributed to give her importance in her eyes.

Aware that her aunt's resolves, unlike those of the Medes and Persians, were liable to change, Rosalind instantly wrote to a lady then at Brighton, and requested her to secure Lady Wyedale a house without delay.

CHAP. IX.

"She who in secret yields her heart,
Again may claim it from her lover;
But she who plays the trifer's part,
Can ne'er her squandered fame recover."

THE busy haste of idle people, the restless impatience of those who have nothing to do, is proverbial; and a common observer might have supposed, when viewing Lady Wyedale's and Rosalind's eager countenances, hearing their hasty orders, and seeing their perpetual motion, that they were doing something more than merely deciding upon what clothes they would take; directing how they should be packed; or speculating on the advantages of the new road to Brighton.

The evening previous to their intended departure, Felicia determined to pay a farewell visit to the Berkelys: they were yet in town, and her only regret on leaving London arose from her reluctance to lose their society.

An intercourse begun so auspiciously, time had ripened into friendship, and every succeeding visit tended to confirm Felicia in the favourable sentiments she cherished towards them.

It has been justly observed, that men can talk of the object of their affections, find a pleasure in dwelling upon their passion, and in describing those charms and virtues which have excited their attachment; but woman shrinks instinctively from the avowal of her love.

Often had Felicia, since Mr. Evanmore's visit, wished to confide to the maternal bosom of Mrs. Berkely the secret of her engagement, and mention the name dearest to her ear; but whenever she tried to begin the subject, her words died away, and a blush alone betrayed something was labouring at the heart. Silence now seemed treason against friendship; and by requesting Evanmore to accompany her in her walk, she thought she should con-

firm what, she doubted not, Mrs. Berkely had already learnt from report. Evanmore willingly consented to be her companion, in defiance of Rosalind's laughter at the idea of his going like a captive in chains to be exhibited to his mistress's fastidious friends.

Mr. Berkely received them alone. He appeared scarcely less embarrassed than the confused Felicia, who had not anticipated that the first person to whom she should introduce her lover would be Mr. Berkely. A variety of small packing-cases were strewn about, and the room exhibited the nakedness and dreariness of a lodging about to be untenanted.

"We are on the wing for Brighton," said he. "We have, you know, Miss Leycester, long been intending to visit the coast, and have at length decided in favour of Brighton, as it possesses some local advantages which may be of use to poor Maria, on whose account we are going."

Mrs. Berkely and her daughters now entered; and Felicia tried to pronounce the name of Evanmore; but the effort was fruitless, and, her cheeks dyed with blushes, she sat down. Mrs. Berkely and her young friends perceived her embarrassment, but were too delicate to notice it even by a smile; and instantly conjecturing she saw Mr. Evanmore, Mrs. Berkely's easy address to him spared Felicia any further uneasiness.

While Felicia was expressing her joy at the prospect of so soon meeting them again, Mr. Berkely entered into conversation with Evanmore, with whom he soon became much pleased.

"Well, really, mother," said he, when they at length took their leave, "I have, as Irishmen expressively say, been agreeably disappointed. I own, from what I had heard of Mr. Evanmore, I did not expect to find him so sensible; and I acknowledge I have often secretly wondered at Miss Leycester's attachment."

"Wondered! why?" inquired Miss Berkely, on whom Evanmore's elegant person and gentlemanly manners had not been thrown away. "Wondered! I scarcely ever saw a more pleasing, handsome man!"

"True," said Mrs. Berkely with a smile; "but your brother gave Miss Leycester credit for having a mind above being captivated with mere externals; and he had heard what he now finds was unjust, that Mr. Evanmore's understanding was by no means strong, or his education a very liberal one."

Miss Berkely blushed. "Ah, dear mamma, I see my error; but you must not expect in me a Miss Leycester."

"I now repeat your question, and ask why? The abilities and personal attractions of Miss Leycester fall to the lot of few young women; but my Sophia has an understanding that, if properly directed, will never mislead her, and is not, I trust, inferior even to her on any of those essential points which constitute the principal charm of woman."

Miss Berkely fondly took her mother's hand. "I will try to deserve your compliment, mamma; and before I ever again give

my confidence, ascertain, like Miss Leycester, that it is well placed."

"It remains to be proved that Miss Leycester's confidence has been well placed," said Mrs. Berkely. "Conformity of character, it is well known, is by no means essential to attachment; but similarity of pursuits, and congeniality of ideas on all major points, are indispensable to real happiness; and I shall be rejoiced to find that the son of Mrs. Evanmore equals the expectations of Mrs. Beaucherc's niece."

When Felicia returned to Portman Square, she was astonished and alarmed at finding Jenny drowned in tears, sitting in her apartment.

Jenny's sorrows were not of that retiring kind which it seems indelicate to interrupt with earthly consolation; and Felicia eagerly pressed to know the origin of her distress. A few words, alas! explained the cause. She had learned from Miss Juliana, Rosalind's maid, between whom and herself there had long existed a secret animosity, that she would not be permitted to accompany the family to Brighton.

"Only to think," she continued, when grief and indignation allowed her to articulate, "after all I have done for 'em all — after slaving and fettling* like a nigger to make friends with 'em, that it should kum to this! Oh, it's too bad for aught! too bad for aught! But I know all as how and about it. Miss Juliana, rabbit her! is at the bottom of it. She's set my Lady Wyedale against me, I am aware. Oh, she's an ill an, and no better than she should be, or I am much mista'en. Perhaps it was fear o'my seeing over much she wished hid; or belike I am not grand enough dressed, and they shame o'me."

Injuries are much easier to be borne than insults, or supposed injustice to our personal merit; and as her fancy suggested this last supposition, her affliction increased so much, that Felicia, who had herself felt a little hurt at this unexpected arrangement, undertook to intercede with Lady Wyedale in her behalf.

For the first time she solicited a favour of any moment of her aunt, and offered to be at the expense of sending her by the coach; but her ladyship was invulnerable to Jenny's misery and Felicia's entreaties.

"My maid shall do what is necessary for you. Your style of dress cannot demand much assistance," was the ultimatum, quitting the room as she delivered it.

"Why did you not use your influence, sister," asked Felicia, a little reproachfully, to Rosalind, who had remained silent during the conversation.

"My influence! Why, have you not already discovered that she is never to be persuaded into anything? To solicit a thing from her is tantamount to losing your suit. Besides, as your

* • Cleaning.

maid would say, she is now in a most *particklar* bad temper ; so that I dare not attempt the thing ; and she has been thrown into it by learning from Evanmore that your delectable friends, the Berkelys, are going to Brighton. They were, I know, intending to go to the sea : I half feared it might be there ; for your good people have no objection to seeing the pomps and vanities of the world, if they cannot partake of them ; but I was aware if she thought they would visit Brighton she would stay away, or march somewhere else, and I had a motive for wishing to be there ; so I told her, when she prudently wished to obtain a little information respecting their views before she wrote to engage lodgings, that she might depend upon it Brighton, the seat of the Prince Regent, would never be their selection. I prophesied it would be sadly too gay, and declared that Worthing, Bognor, — every other place on the coast, in short, — would be more likely ; and now that the house is taken, and no getting off but at a tremendous expense and a betrayal of her motives, she feels obliged to go. Oh, no ! the thing is hopeless, be assured. Poor Jenny must not expect to lave her sweet person in Neptune's briny element, from which I (born under a more auspicious planet) intend to spring captivating as the bright goddess who emerged from its crested foam in days of yore. Come, don't look so disconsolate. I thought you had been too much of a philosopher to lament what is unavoidable. Jenny will have plenty of time to gossip, and see sights in our absence, the two greatest pleasures her mind is capable of enjoying. Besides, as there seems to be an implacable animosity between her and my *mistress of the robes*, I really think she will be more comfortable to remain where she is ; and I must not have you dejected, lest your gloom should throw a shade over my spirits, and I mean to be excessively happy at Brighton. *Appropos* — I suppose you have not forgotten Lord Edgermond is there ? His uncle has a permanent residence on the Steyne."

"I should have done so, had not your anxiety to direct our footsteps there reminded me of it."

"Ah, don't be too confident ; nor so affectedly indifferent. To be sure you are engaged, otherwise it would be impossible to see him with perfect *nonchalance*."

"Why impossible ?"

"How can you ask such a question ? *Imprimis*, has he not a coronet ?"

"True ; but that does not, in my opinion, contain within its gilded circle all the perfections of man ; nor ensure all the happiness he is capable of enjoying. It must, and ought, always to command respect, but it cannot secure esteem, nor control adversity."

"Well, I know you have odd, obsolete ideas. Then is he not an Adonis — an Apollo Belvedere — in short, is he not beautiful ?"

"Beautiful, Rosalind ! Pray don't apply that term to any man — I think the dignity of the lords of the creation absolutely

degraded by such an epithet. Besides, I esteem beauty so unnecessary an attribute in them, that its absence or possession is perfectly immaterial. Even in woman it ought never to be too highly estimated, and for the honour of our sex, I really think person with them is little considered when put in competition with the more lasting charms of the mind."

"I do not wonder that these are your sentiments," said Rosalind archly, "for it cannot be denied, that Mr. Evanmore is certainly very plain."

Felicia blushed. "His appearance might not, at first, I will admit, interest me in his favour; but I should never have permitted myself to love him had not his heart been in unison with his features."

Rosalind laughed aloud: "My dear Philly, spare yourself the trouble of defence. I like you all the better for the smack of corporeality betrayed in your naughty desire of a husband, and choice of such a noiste good-looking young lad, as your Jenny would say, if she dared to speak so familiarly of her future mester Squire Evanmore. It brings you more on a level with myself—I seem to be more sure of your sojourn on earth—for, positively you are so celestial on all other points, that I have sometimes looked narrowly and nervously at your shoulders to see if wings were budding there to bear you away to your native skies. What a sweet colour I have given you! softly rosy as that of a pure pearly shell—you are really very, very pretty—one does not see it at first. But, dearest, to resume the thread of our discourse, you may rest assured every young lady's lover has much the same sort of heart, varied by a few lighter or deeper shades of difference. Edgermond, for instance, is perhaps rather more of a *philanderer* than Evanmore, or at least he has the reputation of being *un peu volage* in his attachments to the fair sex; and, I must candidly confess, I have not the least idea that his lordship has any very strong aspirations after matrimony. But few young men have—and——"

"Then I fervently hope, my dearest, dearest Rosalind, you will discourage all his attentions: treat him for the future with the most distant reserve."

"My dear little sanctimonious prude, how excessively becoming that blush of anger is to you. Your virtuous indignation against *philanderers*, has given to your countenance all that it wanted—animation. I do wish Evanmore was here! Now don't you know the greater the difficulty in bringing the gentleman to bear his chains, the greater the *éclat* to his enslaver? Have you lived in the country all your life, and are not aware, that the fox which has afforded the hardest day's chase, is always the most prized by the sportsman?"

"Oh, Rosalind!" cried Felicia in a tone of bitter disappointment and mortification, as her mind first slowly admitted the idea that her idolised sister did not possess those principles and

feelings which are the only bulwark of woman, and give the best polish to beauty.

"You are thinking of me, Felicia," said Rosalind, suddenly fixing her dark, laughing eyes on her sister's face, and playfully flinging one lily arm around her neck as Felicia sat pensive and silent at the table; "and your reflections are not of a complimentary nature."

"I was undoubtedly thinking of you," replied Felicia, a little embarrassed at Rosalind's ready development of her sentiments.

"And, as I guessed, not investing me with the attributes of an angel. No pair of pinions light, and bright, and glittering with prismatic hues, like the ethereal visions of Murillo's imagination, presented themselves to yours as fitting adornments of my pretty shoulders? Well, I forgive you; but indeed you must acknowledge you are a little of a prude, and look for a degree of perfection you will never meet with—don't faint—even in *le plus amiable des hommes*, Evanmore."

Felicia turned very red. "If by the term prude, you mean I possess that delicacy of mind which is the safeguard of modesty, I hope I shall never lose the appellation: and if I meet not with that virtue in Evanmore which all *may* reach if they choose, and all *must* attain, or misery will be their portion; be assured I will never marry him, though our separation should cost me all that renders this world dear to me."

"Bravo! Two good novel-like sentences, garnished with a small tincture of tragedy rant, and more heat in Philly's face than I ever expected to see there. I believe if I had thought my little harmless remarks would have elicited such a *tirade*, I should have spared them. But joking apart, my dear Felicia, in my aunt Beaucherc's time all these things might be obtained in a lover, but now it is a *bénisse* to expect them. I protest to you no one thinks of being hard upon a man because he is a little gay, or perhaps keeps a pussy."

Felicia gave an involuntary start—Rosalind answered it with a laugh.

"You, dear primitive Christian, I fear, after all, you will add one more to the eleven thousand virgins so celebrated in monastic history. Why, so little are such punctilios regarded, Lord Edgermond would not care if all the world knew he had *une chère amie*."

"No! how lost must he have become to every ennobling sentiment! How depraved his mind, when he ceases even to wish to be thought amiable! It is a maxim of Rochefoucauld that hypocrisy viewed as the tribute Vice pays to Virtue is not destitute of all excuse. Oh, Rosalind, repress, for the sake of your peace and respectability, the dangerous attentions of such a man."

"My dear Felicia, these are the ravings of a novice. Lord Edgermond is handsome, elegant, rich, fashionable, and has a long *et cetera* of other perfections. Do you, therefore, seriously

think he would be refused by any woman, however high her rank, merely on the ground of not being a Joseph?"

"I should hope some would; and I trust he will never, never place it in my Rosalind's power, to show that she lightly esteems the want of that principle which alone confers honour or respectability on man."

"Knowing that you do not mean to be spiteful, I forgive you dear Philly——"

"And I hope," continued Felicia, earnestly laying her hand on the snowy arm that yet rested on her neck, "as you are aware of his character, you will not permit your affections to become entangled beyond the power of withdrawing them, should he never solicit their possession. This alone is a subject I have often wished to hint to you; for indeed Rosalind I have long apprehended he felt not that attachment towards you which, unacquainted with his character, I then wished."

"Oh! on that head *consolez-vous*. My heart, *heureusement*, is in no danger. People in this age don't marry from a silly *penchant*, or because they have, as you would term it, *kindred souls*. All that sort of thing is left for the *canaille*, to whom, as it can make no difference whether they live in a hut or a hovel, liking goes a great way. Oh, no! ladies marry to have a house of their own, an establishment, liberty, and all the glorious accompaniments included in the privileges of a matron, from tyrannising over a husband, down to plaguing his footboy. And men—But what can tempt men to marry, it is impossible to conjecture! for they have all these advantages without the penalty. Well, I believe we must now bring our *tête-à-tête* to a finale. And really what you have been saying possesses one charm even for me—novelty. These are new doctrines to me. Is it instinct in you, Felicia? Were you really always the same prudent, wise, demure, sententious soul you now are? And the marvel becomes greater by thinking of what you will be. Dear! what a *rara-avis* of a woman must Aunt Beauclerc have been, if you are only now, as you sometimes tell me, striving to tread in her steps. What was she like? It is so long since I visited you at Leominster, and for so brief a period, I can recall nothing distinctly to my memory; but I have a dreamy recollection of a little shadowy creature, with silver hair under the oddest of quizzical caps, mingled up with long prayers, and the most delicious strawberries and cream in the whole world. With the latter (the strawberries and cream I mean) I have often since wished to renew my acquaintance."

Felicia coloured. Any flippant allusion to her aunt never failed to excite her displeasure, and she was turning away when Rosalind sportively detained her.

"Nay, you shall not leave me in anger. Indeed you must not let that dear, little, meek face know what it is to feel a flush of passion, such as that which sometimes crimsons my wicked

visage when Auntie Wyedale is more than commonly annoying. Remember these sort of provocations exercise your favourite virtues, and considering me as an instrument whereby you are to be made yet more of a saint—love me still better—though, I believe, on that principle the personage I have just quoted, namely, Auntie Wyedale, has the most claim to your regard. Dear! with her talents and inclination, what a much more voluminous essay she could write on the ‘art of ingeniously tormenting,’ than the one which has already given so many useful hints to a good-natured public.”

“Oh, Rosalind!” said Felicia with a sigh, “you have that about you which disarms resentment, however well deserved.”

“Have I indeed?” pressing her snowy fingers on each side of Felicia’s face, “I rejoice to hear it; for thoughtless and unfeeling as I may sometimes appear, I do assure you I love you better than anything in the *whole* world—aye the whole world, but—myself.”—She imprinted a fond kiss on her sister’s forehead, and then gaily flew out of the room to make some further preparation for the excursion.

It is in the nature of affection to exalt the beloved object, and invest it with ten thousand fancied perfections. Felicia had suddenly made a painful discovery; for in the midst of Rosalind’s apparent levity, she had believed she possessed strong virtuous principles; and still her attachment encircled Rosalind in a splendid halo, whose brightness dazzled the sober sight of her judgment. Even yet she ascribed to mere *gaieté de cœur* what had escaped her sister’s lips, and though lamenting that she was so volatile, and so little under the influence of religious impressions, fondly flattered herself she should be able to effect some alteration in a mind open as the day, and a disposition so naturally inclined to be all that is lovely and amiable. “And even if she were serious,” thought Felicia, when she laid her head on her pillow, “ought I not rather to regard her with increased pity? Poor girl! did she not say mine were novel sentiments to her. Oh, may I never forget to be grateful for the superior advantages I have received; or, while I am thus sensible of her faults, omit to remember that, such as she is, I should have been, had not a merciful Providence ordained that my infant steps should be guided by the hand of one of his chosen people!”

CHAP. X.

" Ah !— World unknown ! how charming is thy view !
 Thy pleasures many, and each pleasure new ;
 Ah !— World experienced ! what of thee is told ?
 How few thy pleasures, and those few how old !"

CRABBE.

TIME always mitigates, if it does not wholly efface, those mortifications which are inflicted upon us by caprice or unkindness ; though if its power were estimated by the acuteness of our feelings under their first impression, we should say, their remembrance would live for ever. Happily also every mind has been gifted with its own peculiar antidote to sorrow. The quick and irritable soon exhaust their sufferings in violence, while the patient lose its bitterness in fortitude and resignation. As the " flood of grief decreaseth when it can swell no higher," so poor Jenny's lamentations gradually began to subside ; and Felicia had the satisfaction of seeing her in a comparative state of tranquillity before she quitted her.

Though several years older than herself, knowing her situation as Jenny's mistress rendered her in some degree answerable for her conduct, Felicia gave her, previous to her departure, as much work to execute as would, she thought, leave her unexposed to the temptations and dangers of utter idleness ; selected several books suited to her capacity and views, from her own library, for her perusal ; and, sensible that her rank gave her a consequence in Jenny's eyes, independent of their connection with each other, intreated her not to suffer the pernicious example or evil entreaties of others ever to influence her to forget those precepts, which had been so carefully instilled into her mind by one who was now the inhabitant of a brighter sphere ; and whose spirit, perhaps, might be permitted to watch over those whom she had, while living, so anxiously endeavoured to train to that happiness she was now enjoying.

Jenny wept, and promised obedience. Like her young mistress, she had anticipated her visit to London, with almost unmingled sensations of delight, and, like her, had experienced how different, alas, are pleasures in prospective and pleasures in possession ! She thought, when an inhabitant of the metropolis, and living in the splendid establishment of the rich Lady Wyedale, the day would only be too short for its enjoyments. She had now passed nearly four months in that scene, which at a distance appeared so alluring, and began to look back with something like regret on the quiet amusements, the placid happiness of the little sunny cottage at Leominster. There she had been esteemed for those qualities which here were either wholly overlooked or despised. Her skill in making ointments, broths, and compounding simple medicines, under the direction of her mistress, for the poor of the village, the neatness with which she executed her

share of the clothes and baby-linen that Mrs. Beaucherc often gave away among her humble neighbours, her cheerful piety, and industrious habits, which there had obtained her the warmest commendations, were here totally disregarded. Nobody in Lady Wyedale's establishment was unfashionable enough to care what became of the sores or sufferings of the *canaille*. Her desire to go to church had subjected her to many a laugh in the servants' hall, and many a reprimand in the housekeeper's room; while her exertions, as a sort of jack-of-all-trades, lady's-maid to the two other lady's-maids, assistant to the housekeeper, and partner with the housemaid, had secured her neither regard nor respect. Nothing is so contagious as contempt, or so disagreeable to the unprincipled, as principle. Her young mistress, it was evident, had no interest with their lady — was going to marry a man of small fortune; and, along with her maid, possessed notions and habits which rendered both very unpleasant and dangerous guests. Jenny, therefore, gradually found herself a personage of no importance, and at length displeased at the injustice and unkindness with which she was treated, began to discontinue those attentions which had alone procured her any show of civility. Her conduct had been especially resented by Miss Juliana Simpson, Rosalind's maid; and, after some trifling *fracas*, the gauntlet was fairly thrown down between them, and they were only waiting for an opportunity of fighting it out. As Jenny rightly conjectured, she owed this heavy disappointment to the malevolence and machinations of her adversary, Miss Juliana, who had many reasons for not wishing to have her as a companion; and she never ceased her importunities to Lady Wyedale's maid, to second her suit with her ladyship, till she had succeeded in achieving the point. To atone, however, for all these storms and disappointments, Jenny had a harbour of rest in prospective, in which she had anchored with a certainty of happiness. Felicia's marriage would, she felt persuaded, restore her to all her former consequence; nay environ her with additional glory. She was promised the situation of housekeeper by Evanmore himself, and from the kindness and attachment of Felicia she knew she had everything to expect. It was, therefore, with a degree of pleasure that almost repaid her past mortification, she received the linen which Felicia, with a modest blush, put into her hand, assured from her silence and confusion, she might consider it the first step towards their mutual happiness. And her heart cheered from its late gloom by this simple circumstance, she saw her young mistress drive from the door without a shadow of regret.

Summer was fled, but the mild graces of autumn remained to deck the lovely face of nature; and Felicia, who travelled in Evanmore's phaeton, saw the beauties of the surrounding landscape with the enlightened eye of taste and piety. The villagers were busy with the harvest; and the deep golden colour of the waving corn-fields, seen through the leafy branches of the trees

or obtained where a gate or stile broke the uniformity of the flower-covered hedges, on either side of the road, beautifully contrasted with the clear serene azure of the sky, whose lovely vault was dappled by a few fleecy clouds of transparent lustre.

Mrs. Beaucherc resided some miles from the coast, as her complaints were of a nature that rendered its breezes rather prejudicial than otherwise. Felicia had never yet seen the sea; and Evanmore anticipated much pleasure from her surprise on viewing the gay groups scattered on the Steyne — Felicia herself, from contemplating the grandeur of the majestic ocean.

They set off after breakfast; but it was late in the afternoon when Lady Wyedale, who travelled with her own horses and dined on the road, was in readiness to recommence her journey.

The day had then become suddenly overcast, and Evanmore, fearful of rain, urged Felicia to avail herself of Lady Wyedale's offer of a seat in her barouche; but Felicia, too impatient to view the sea, and unapprehensive of the threatening storm, declined the invitation. For many miles the sky was shrouded in heavy clouds, and a cold piercing wind blew so keenly in the faces of the travellers, they had no spirits to enter into any conversation. The road too was dreary and barren; and as she wrapped her pelisse around her, Felicia almost felt an uneasy presentiment of some impending disappointment. The evening closed rapidly in, and they were almost enveloped in darkness, when the wind subsided, and the moon, after long struggling to acquire her dominion, suddenly emerged from behind a dark cloud, and shone forth in spotless glory. The night was chill, but not undelightful; and the soft light of the stars gleamed bright in the clear canopy of heaven.

"See, Felicia!" said Evanmore. She looked eagerly forward, and in a moment the dark blue sea, its transparent waves, heaving and sparkling under the glittering radiance of the moon, met her eyes. It looked a flood of liquid light, and each wave was as a wave of silver. The lovely planet of evening shone brilliantly on the deep cerulean of the cloudless sky, and blended its fairy beams with the long stream of refulgence that irradiated the broad expanse of the illumined ocean. All was solemn stillness — the calm repose of nature — not a sound was heard but the ripple of the waves as they murmured over the sands, or dashed with impetuosity against the pier. A few rays of the moon whitened the picturesque walls of the church, and several lights glanced cheerfully from the windows of the now silent inhabitants. "Oh, what a scene!" whispered Felicia, pressing Evanmore's arm. "How the soul expands to its Maker, when the glories of that world He has called out of darkness and chaos thus meet the gaze of his creatures!"

"You are a little of an enthusiast, Felicia," said he, smiling. "What would Rosalind say if she heard you?"

'Am I an enthusiast, because I see with admiration and gra-

itude the works of the Almighty?" said she, in a tone of mingled surprise, and tender reproach.

"Undoubtedly not. I was merely thinking Rosalind would have quizzed you, my love."

"Probably she might; but Rosalind——" she paused—Rosalind was so dear to her, she revolted from avowing, even to Evanmore, the least hint to her disadvantage; and fearful her broken sentence might have conveyed some suspicion of the truth, she hastily turned the conversation.

There are moments when the soul, wrought up to a degree of almost enthusiasm, is peculiarly liable to the impressions of pain or pleasure—when susceptible of the purest, tenderest sentiments of our nature, the heart shrinks with unwonted irritability from anything that seems to jar the chord of refined feeling. Felicia's spirits received a sudden chill, from which she vainly strove to recover them, and she entered the scene of so much expected happiness dejected, she scarcely knew why.

The last three months of Rosalind's existence had been spent in something like obscurity; for decency required, that she should not partake of any public amusements until a few weeks after Mrs. Beauclerc's death; and after that period the summer was so far advanced, that London boasted of few attractions for her. The pleasures therefore she intended to partake of in Brighton, possessed a certain degree of novelty in her eyes that greatly enhanced their value; and she prepared for their enjoyment with all the ardour of a youthful imagination and unbounded hilarity of spirits. It was high season; and Brighton, honoured by the presence of its tutelary divinity, never possessed more attractions. Rosalind instantly launched into all its gaieties, and tried to persuade herself she had never felt happier. A certain indescribable sensation, however, every now and then stole over her heart, which, like a thick cloud passing over the sun, darkens for a moment its mid-day radiance. She had seen Lord Edgermond several times on the sands, and met him repeatedly at the theatre. He had likewise called twice upon Lady Wyedale; but he preserved towards her a distance which was as strange as it was disagreeable. Rosalind vainly endeavoured to thaw the icy chains in which he seemed bound; and, mistress of all the varied arts of a finished coquette, tried each in its turn without success. His lordship's bow when they met on the sands was graceful as ever—his smile, as he sometimes nodded while he rode past the carriage, or carelessly moved to her from an opposite box at the theatre, was always sweet and condescending—but cold.

The love of admiration was, with Rosalind, paramount over every other feeling; universal conquest, in her opinion, the palladium of happiness; and while clouds of mortified vanity darkened her beautiful brow, she half-reluctantly admitted the idea, that she had indeed failed to inspire his lordship with sufficient

affection to make her an offer of his hand, and, what she prized more, his title. Still, when her glass reflected to her view her matchless figure, and the beauty of her lovely features, she could not believe his conquest entirely hopeless; and every day beheld her more attractive than the last.

Felicia, in the mean time, renewed her friendship with the Berkelys, and while Rosalind was gaily fluttering from one scene of amusement to another, divided her time between her affectionate attendance on her aunt, whose increased indisposition really demanded such attention, and the Berkelys, with whom she commonly walked every day. Evanmore sometimes drove her in his phaeton; and devoted to her all the leisure which Rosalind left on his hands; but he was too convenient and agreeable a companion to be much spared at such a time. Rosalind had no objection to be seen with a handsome, elegant man, continually in her train, and one whose engagement to her sister precluded the possibility of his being any impediment to her views. Then he danced inimitably, and always remained disengaged, that, if any disagreeable partner presented himself, she might plead his prior right to her hand. Under these circumstances Felicia willingly waved many of those little attentions, and that exclusive devotion she had a right to expect from her lover, without a sentiment of regret.

"There," cried Rosalind, one morning, gaily flinging down a card, "is a ticket for the concert to-night. My aunt refuses to go; so we are to be chaperoned by one of the lady patronesses, who will meet us at the door, and you positively shall accept it. Nay, don't start, and look so dubious. A concert would not sully the purity of an angel; and as a proof of its innocence, the Berkelys, whom you make your prototype, will be sure to be there. Even the old lady has no objection to giving her ears a treat at a concert, though she would die rather than indulge her eyes with the sight of a play."

"Surely, Felicia," in a tone half-serious, half-playful, "you do not endeavour to be the servile copyist of the Berkelys?" said Evanmore, on whose mind the sneers and ridicule levelled at them by Lady Wyedale and Rosalind had not fallen harmless; "I hope you will go whether they do or not."

"I had no intention of declining to accompany you," said Felicia; "I merely looked uncertain, because I feared my aunt might not be able to spare me."

Lady Wyedale had little of what is called the milk of human kindness in her composition; but Felicia's unceasing assiduities, and unwearied endurance of her humours, had gained a little upon her former dislike; and she instantly gave her permission to avail herself of Rosalind's present.

CHAP. XI.

"So bright the tear in Beauty's eye,
Love half regrets to kiss it dry —
So sweet the blush of bashfulness,
Even Pity scarce can wish it less."

LORD BYRON.

OF music, as a science and amusement, Felicia was passionately fond. She had a fine ear, and though by no means so great a proficient as Rosalind, who had studied for *effect*, she had both knowledge and taste enough to render a concert an entertainment of all others enchanting to her. She was putting the last finish to her dress when Rosalind, whose every step was a bound, and every motion had the agile lightness of a sylph, gracefully glided into her room.

"Ah! dressed already! I am come to give you my assistance, but I see you scarcely require it. And yet, if it would not be treason, I could point out a little improvement."

"Commencez, then," said Felicia gaily.

"Why, I should like to see a little more of you — *comprenez-vous?*"

"No," said Felicia, with the utmost simplicity.

"Why, I should like to see more of my Philly's lily-white skin, and less of her crape tucker. Ah! I find I am treading on forbidden ground; I see I must be contented. You seem quite frightened at the bare suggestion; and after all, you look very pretty as you are. Don't be alarmed, I won't lay violent hands either on you, or your dearly-beloved tucker," she continued, approaching her; "I only wish to give your glossy tresses a rather better air. Really, Philly, a little more *usage du monde*, and a little less *mauvais honte*, would make you quite the rage; and, instead of being contented with a man of fifteen hundred a year, you might without vanity aspire to one of fifteen thousand."

Felicia smiled, and shook her head, and arm-in-arm they went into the drawing-room.

"Does she not look pretty?" she cried, throwing open the door, and leading in Felicia as she spoke; "does she not look pretty, Evanmore — now I have made her more like other people?"

Evanmore readily assented; but he was more struck by the remark, that she looked, for the first time, *like other people*, than charmed by her appearance. The excessive admiration which he had seen bestowed on Rosalind, had excited a wish in his bosom, that his own Felicia might be thought equally attractive; and as they were descending the stairs to enter the carriage, he whispered her, that he wished she would always dress like Rosalind.

"If I did," said she, with a sweet smile, "I should not resemble her. You know, my dearest Evanmore, she is a finished beauty."

Evanmore felt something like mortification on receiving this

intelligence; but they had now reached the carriage: Rosalind was already seated: they drove off; and with a fluttering heart, and spirits wound up by youthful expectation, Felicia made her first *début* in the concert-room at Brighton.

After having secured seats which permitted them to see every object to great advantage, the lady patroness left them for awhile, and Rosalind, who was an excellent cicerone, began to give her delighted sister some account of the principal *dramatis personæ*.

"Don't glue your eyes to the orchestra and chandeliers," said she in a whisper, "but keep them on the door; and when you see any object that strikes your attention, give me a gentle push, and I will leave off flirting with your elect, to give you all the information in my power. Do not, however, for mercy's sake, ask any questions, because when we are surrounded by neighbours, if they caught them, they would set you down for a mere country cousin."

Evanmore almost shuddered at the words "mere country cousin" met his ears, and half-apprehensively he fixed his eyes on the object of suspicion; but all his fears died away as he caught hers beaming on him with mingled tenderness and delight.

It was very early; for Rosalind, though she liked to go late to every other amusement, had no desire to be lost in the crowd of a concert-room; and she was gaily chatting away with Evanmore, when the prescribed signal between Felicia and herself diverted her attention to the door.

"Oh, Evanmore! fly directly, and bring her to us—you see she does not know where to go," she cried, bowing most graciously, as she spoke, to a young lady of singular appearance, who was standing close to the door, and with an opera-glass held to her eye, reconnoitering the assembled group with all the cool composure of a general at the head of his troops. "Yet stay, let me give Felicia some hint of the lady's character, that she may enjoy the treat more. The object of your well-founded amazement is, that most unique animal of the biped species, a philosopher in petticoats. That is, a sort of incongruous, heterogeneous mass of learning, ignorance, and folly; either laughable from its absurdity, or disgusting from its pedantry. She reads her Bible in Hebrew, her Testament in Greek, her Prayer-book in French, and her novels in German—so at least her grand-mamma says. Then, as she is always laudably engaged in the pursuit of learning, whenever you meet her you are favoured, in addition to these standing dishes, with a taste of what she is then hashing up for the public, which is generally decided by the fashion of the day, or the situation in which she happens to be placed. Thus, about four years ago, when it first became the rage to crowd every room in your house with flowers and exotics, she was a botanist; quoted whole pages out of Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, and stunned your ears with *Monandria*, *Diandria*, *Monadelphina*, *Polyadelphia*, *Fulcra*, *Folia*, *Fructus*, &c. &c.

And really, while this was her hobby, her rides were as amusing to her friends as herself; but unfortunately happening one evening to describe, rather too minutely, the marriage of a white rose-tree with a black currant bush, from which strange union she expected a sort of magpie-coloured, mule bud, Lord Edgermond laughed so heartily, and teased her with so many questions, her modesty took the alarm; or rather, perceiving that she could no longer show her knowledge without exciting ridicule, she relinquished the study altogether (for display is her object), and took to one where she might canter her favourite Pegasus without apprehension or control. At one time she affected to be a mineralogist and lapidary, and then, like the good girl in the fairy-tale, she never opened her mouth but some precious stone fell out of it, from the diamond of Golconda to the pebble of Scotia. She bored you with accounts of spars, crystallisations, stalactites, petrifications, fossils, bitumens, metals perfect and imperfect, and without mercy, or any compunctious visitings of conscience, tore up the inside of poor old mother earth to supply her with topics of conversation. She has, in short, a little knowledge of everything; a little of languages, a little of botany, a little of mineralogy, a little of conchology, a little of chemistry, a little of ornithology, a little of meteorology, &c. &c., and precious little it is. If a philosopher could look into her head, like the lover in the Spectator, who had the privilege of viewing his mistress's brains, I verily believe he would see much the same as he did, with the addition of some crabbed words, and heads and tails of the sciences. She appears, however, wonderfully wise when you are first acquainted with her; and I have seen as much consternation exhibited in a party where she has, after having been long studying how to display herself to the greatest advantage, pounced upon a poor female acquaintance, as when a hawk or a kite, after hovering some seconds in the air, stoops on a defenceless chick, to the terror of the farm-yard. But these literary alarms soon wear off on acquaintance, for she is all *écorce*, a mere outside shell of learning, no nut to satisfy the palate after the eye has been sufficiently gratified. Indeed she always reminds me, when she is preparing to strike her auditors dumb with the profundity of her wisdom, of the Turkish cry, "In the name of the Prophet—*figs*."—As she is now the inhabitant of a seaport, conchology will be the order of the day: you are a stranger, and, mark me, she will burst upon you like the rushing of a cataract, in her literary character: therefore be prepared, and don't feed her egregious vanity by seeming alarmed; for she is never more delighted than when, by some of her enigmas, she sees she has completely puzzled her audience. Meet her with her own weapons. When she cries univalve—do you say bivalve. When she talks of corallines—do you speak of zoophytes; and if you find yourself in a dilemma, or as your dear Jenny would say *quandary*, do as I have often before done, intrench yourself in

some high-sounding words and unintelligible phrases, and get handsomely out of the scrape."

Felicia involuntarily smiled as Rosalind finished this sketch of her young acquaintance; but she had no inclination to prolong the topic by a reply; for at that moment she saw Mr. Berkely, his mother, and eldest sister enter the room. It was now nearly full, and they appeared to have some difficulty in obtaining places.

"Oh! do offer them our seats," said she eagerly to Evanmore.

"Stir at your peril, man!" said Rosalind, laying hold on his arm; "I have been rejoicing at our distance."

Charmed by the magic of her eye and voice, Evanmore instantly resumed the seat from which he had half risen, and Felicia felt momentarily hurt. She had never before met the Berkelys in company; and the mild dignity of Mrs. Berkely, the tempered sprightliness of her daughter, as she appeared expressing her delight at the splendour of the scene, and the cheerful intelligence portrayed in Mr. Berkely's features, as he directed his attention from her to his mother, never struck her more pleasingly. The concert soon, however, commenced, and in the exquisite melody of some of the first performers of the age, she forgot her temporary uneasiness. Her enjoyment was not, however, without alloy. Rosalind came for any other purpose than that of listening, and though she had a delighted hearer in Evanmore, she insisted upon Felicia's also attending to her observations.

"Do you see that young man with pink hair and white eyes, 'in a fine phrenzy rolling,' close by the *foolosopher* I have already introduced to your notice? Report says, he has been taken captive by her attractions, personal and mental, and intends to woo the nine sisters to his abode, in the person of Miss Lucretia Beaumont. I am, however, sceptical as to the fact, for he is a rare specimen of absurdity himself; and there is an old vulgar proverb, that two persons of the same profession never agree. Besides, she has not many golden charms to atone for her deficiency of beauty; and unless fame has sounded her brazen trumpet falsely, his fortune has sustained *un peu déperissement*, in his endeavours to improve it, as speculator in every sort of commodity but common sense. He was born with a good estate, but unluckily with it, a restless, enterprising spirit, that would never let him be satisfied with the productions and operations of nature. At one time he proposed to acquire the riches of Cræsus by extracting oil from sunflowers—at another by converting thistle-down into something which was to usurp the long-established dominion of feathers and horsehair. This last conundrum cost him a suit at law; for his neighbours indicted forty or fifty acres of thistle plants as a nuisance; and by the time he was cast, some other vision occupying that poor wisp of contradictions, his brain, the thistle-down was suffered to fly where it listed."

The first part of the concert was now over; and Evanmore,

taking an arm of each, strolled up and down the room. Felicia longed to draw nearer to the Berkelys, but in vain. Once they were almost close, and she thought they must meet; but Rosalind, aware of their vicinity, hastily retrograded, and the opportunity never again presented itself.

"I always feel like a bird released from a net, when I get clear from the humdrums," said she, as the Berkelys vanished from her view. "Evanmore, go and try to bring us a little refreshment here. I will take care of your little frightened hare in your absence: the poor thing wants somebody to protect her."

Evanmore laughed, and gaily flew to procure some lemonade.

Scarcely was he gone, when an involuntary start from Rosalind diverted Felicia's attention from the passing crowd, and she saw Lord Edgermond and two ladies standing almost exactly opposite to them. His lordship's eye glanced over them, but no sign of recognition followed his gaze. He appeared in brilliant spirits, and after chatting some minutes with his fair associates, coolly turned away without bestowing on the blushing, mortified Rosalind even one of those distant nods which had hitherto kept alive some indistinct hopes of future conquest.

"And here is the *finale* of *la belle amitié* between you and his lordship, I hope, my dear Rosalind," said Felicia.

But Rosalind, though indignant, with a truly feminine admiration of variety, thought he had never appeared half so fascinating or delightful before; and, estimating her own perfections little less highly than his, resolved not, as yet at least, to abandon the chase in despair.

While meditating future stratagems to accomplish this grand capture, her ear was suddenly arrested by the well-known tones of Mrs. Hustleton's voice, as she forced her way through a group of young men to join them. Her first impulse was, to fly the society of this most disagreeable acquaintance, and she was rising from her seat when the words, "Well, Frank, I shall now at least be able to introduce you to the beautiful Miss Rosalind, and the lovely Miss Leycester!" uttered in a half-whisper, were too agreeable to the feelings of a disappointed coquette to be wholly disregarded. She turned her head, and Mrs. Hustleton immediately presented a handsome young man as her relation.

"Ah! this is so fortunate! we have only been in Brighton a few hours, or I should have done myself the pleasure of calling on dear Lady Wyedale; particularly as Mr. Osborne has been extremely desirous of being acquainted with my two charming young friends."

At any other time Rosalind would have treated this servile flattery with little less than open derision, or silent contempt; but irritated at Lord Edgermond's insolence, piqued at his indifference, and anxious to awaken his jealousy, she rewarded its author by the first really gracious smile she had ever received. To awaken feelings of admiration was no difficult task to Rosalind Leycester,

and a few arch smiles, a few *piquante* observations, and a few fascinating yet delicate attentions fixed Mr. Osborne near her for the night.

Mrs. Hustleton was much pleased at this unlooked-for reception. In defiance of feelings bordering on instinctive antipathy to Rosalind, she had many reasons, in addition to the one which principally weighed in the scale, for wishing to keep on civil terms with her; for she was the reputed heiress of Lady Wyedale, fashionable, admired, and of high family connections. Full of spirits, she was in the midst of a long exordium to a still longer anecdote, when Evanmore returned. Rosalind took the refreshments he extended to her, without favouring him with a glance, but Felicia's more attentive eye perceived he looked suddenly out of spirits.

"Are you ill?" she fondly whispered.

"No," he replied carelessly, and turning the conversation, he tried to resume his former gaiety. But Felicia, too much attached not to be quick-sighted, saw his spirits had received a sudden check; and half fearful he might be indisposed, half apprehensive of she knew not what, the residue of the evening passed heavily.

Evanmore, in the mean time, fruitlessly exerted himself to shake off the depression and ill-humour into which he had been thrown, by overhearing a dialogue between two gentlemen relative to his bride elect, and her captivating sister. He was returning with his lemonade, when, as he approached the place where they sat, he was obliged to stop a few instants owing to the pressure of the crowd, and while waiting somewhat impatiently before he could proceed, he heard a gentleman inquire the name of Rosalind Leycester's companion.

"I don't know," replied his friend, "somebody I suppose whom the fair Rosalind has charitably escorted as a foil to set off her own charms."

Evanmore's blood rushed into his cheeks, and the desire of listening became so uncontrollable, he shrunk behind them, that no part of the dialogue might escape him.

"No, no," cried the first speaker, "there is not so great a difference as all that between them. Though, of course, much inferior to Miss Leycester, she is still, I think, a lovely young woman."

"Lovely! Oh, no! *Jolie—très jolie*—perhaps—nothing more. Then she wants the assured air of a person accustomed to genteel society; and has not beauty enough to be a *belle*, nor animation enough to constitute her a *bel esprit*."

Evanmore could scarcely refrain from expressing his resentment at this criticism; but before he could determine what to do, they walked to another part of the room. Rosalind and Felicia were exactly opposite to him, and he anxiously endeavoured to convince himself that Felicia had been unjustly treated.

But Felicia's was not a style of beauty to be seen to advantage

in a public room. A complexion constitutionally rather pale than florid, was robbed by the glare of light of those little delicate flushes, which often enlivened it: and her clear hazel eye was not dark enough to form a sufficient contrast to her unadorned hair; while the deep mourning, in which she was still arrayed, tended still further to detract from her personal claims to admiration. Rosalind, on the contrary, never looked more strikingly lovely. She was glorying in the bloom of beauty, and her dress adjusted by the skilful hand of tasteful fashion, added its own attraction. The waving curls of her light brown hair, hung over the glossy bands that braided her high marble forehead and delicately-pencilled brow; while the inimitable transparency of her radiant complexion was admirably set off by the dark brilliancy of her dazzling eyes, and the slight French grey robe richly trimmed with sparkling jet, which decorated her graceful form. The hope of having gained another conquest, added tenfold animation to her sportive features; and, for the first time, Evanmore saw the Felicia Leycester he had so long adored, *without pleasure*. Yet as this conviction flashed upon his mind, he blushed with shame, and felt himself a traitor to love. Still he vainly tried to efface the displeasing impression made on his feelings. The words, "neither beauty enough to be a *belle*, nor animation sufficient to constitute her a *bel esprit*," rung unpleasantly in his ears; and, with a half sigh, he at length admitted the mortifying truth, that Felicia, though a most amiable, interesting girl, had no pretension to vie with her sister, and, like her, would never be an object of general admiration. He felt displeased with himself for being hurt at this discovery, and, dissatisfied with all around him, saw the conclusion of the evening's amusement with unwonted pleasure.

Mr. Osborne took his leave of Rosalind with a look that showed they had not parted for ever; and Rosalind, in high spirits, quitted the room with Evanmore and her sister. They were standing at the entrance, waiting the approach of Lady Wyedale's carriage, when Mr. Berkely, carefully supporting his mother, passed them; he slightly inclined his head, and then stepped forwards to his carriage. Rosalind could not endure to be slighted, even by "humdrums;" and whatever might have been Mr. Berkely's sentiments respecting her, his making no exertion to speak to her during the evening, together with his present distance, convinced her she had no longer any influence over him. She was of opinion that,

"In love, indifference is, sure,
The only sign of perfect cure;"

and, piqued at Mr. Berkely's evident emancipation from her chains, she said, "Look, Evanmore, at Berkely! Really, I think it less ridiculous to see a man tied to his wife's apron-string than to his mother's."

Evanmore laughed.

"Is there anything ridiculous in a man's being attentive to his mother?" said Felicia gravely.

"Evanmore! I declare your spouse elect is afraid what I have said will make you less dutiful to your own mamma."

"No," said Felicia, tenderly pressing Evanmore's hand as it rested in hers, "I know him too well to fear he is in any danger of changing his principles, or being laughed out of what he knows is right, by even Rosalind Leycester."

There is no sensation to an ingenuous mind, more painful or degrading than undeserved applause—than an unbounded confidence of which it seems scarcely deserving. Evanmore felt an indescribable sensation on hearing this compliment, which he had neither the wish nor the power to analyse. A something, however, like a sense of unworthiness fluttered round his heart; and at their parting, as Felicia timidly presented her blushing cheek, he almost drew back, from a remote apprehension that her confidence and attachment were hardly merited.

CHAP. XII.

"Alas! the ills of life
Claim the full vigour of a mind prepared,
Prepared for patient, long, laborious strife;
Its guide experience, and truth its guard."

BEATTIE.

THE happiness of domestic life flows not from the beauty that enchants the eye, or the graces that captivate in a ball-room; and it is a truism which cannot be too often repeated, that those who succeed best in amusing strangers, are not always found to be the most enlivening members of the circle assembled round the fireside of home.

Evanmore reviewed the events of the evening with increased self-displeasure, as these reflections arose to his memory; and he early sought the residence of his Felicia to atone by augmented affection for his late mental alienation. He found the party at breakfast. Lady Wyedale disposed to be irritable, and more than usually complaining;—her nieces each listening to her ill-humour with faces in exact conformity to their feelings. In Felicia's he saw patience mingled with pity; and in Rosalind's displeasure mixed up with ridicule. It seemed indeed somewhat difficult to account for her ladyship's ill-humour, or make out from her half-uttered reproaches and invectives, more than that, though she had given them leave to attend the concert without her, she was indignant at their having gone; and felt equally angry with Rosalind because she had enjoyed the evening's amusement, as displeased with Felicia for avowing she had not

received from it all the pleasure she had anticipated. Her ladyship, indeed, could scarcely have assigned any better motives for her dissatisfaction. She was, in truth, for the first time, labouring under real indisposition, and made sensible, by suffering, that the time was arriving when she must resign the gilded splendours of the gay world, the pleasures of youth, and the enjoyments of health, for the faded flowers which thinly strew the path of declining age. She had hitherto known no misfortunes—hers had been a life of unsullied prosperity—unclouded enjoyment. Her hopes of happiness had never pointed to any other state of existence, and she recoiled with terror from the idea which, in defiance of her efforts to banish it, stole occasionally over her mind, that all these glories and delights must be exchanged for the cold dark confines of the grave.

Rosalind was in brilliant spirits. She had, or fancied she had, added one more to the list of her humble adorers; and, as dressed for securing her conquest she sat near her aunt, Evanmore could not help contrasting her speaking features, laughing eye, and glowing charms, with the peevish inanity expressed in Lady Wyedale's face and manner; or avoid deploring that age should despoil the loveliness of youth of every attraction.

Time is, indeed, a bitter enemy to the graces of youth; and did we not become gradually familiarised to the change which each day produces in our appearance, we should contemplate almost with disgust at sixty, those features which at sixteen had never been seen without secret admiration and delight. But time was not the foe who had entirely robbed Lady Wyedale of those personal beauties which five and thirty years before had placed her in a sphere to which she was not born. Pride, discontent, idleness, and natural irascibility of temper, had contributed their aid to complete the ruin Evanmore regretted. Evanmore was not, however, in the habit of searching very deeply into causes, when effects were obvious without the least mental trouble; and with a remote, undefined apprehension that the fascinating Rosalind might, in process of years, become as ugly as her aunt, he tried to regard Felicia's want of her transcendent beauty with more philosophy.

As Rosalind anticipated, Mr. Osborne, who proved to be the enterprising young lawyer formerly described by Rosalind as laying close siege to Mrs. Hustleton's goods and chattels, accompanied his cousin in her promised visit to Lady Wyedale; and in his renewed attentions she found some consolation under Lord Edgermond's estrangement. Her new admirer was young, handsome; had a considerable fortune, and the reputation of being the favourite relative of her old adversary, Mrs. Hustleton, on whose fifteen or twenty thousand pounds she began instinctively to look with more complacency. Not that she had the smallest intention of accepting Mr. Osborne, should he solicit her hand; but in defiance of the unbounded adulation she was in the habit

of receiving, Rosalind had never yet been fairly requested to enter the pale of matrimony; and, she was not unwilling to have it said, that such a man had fallen a victim to her charms. The expensive elegance of Rosalind's dress, her extreme beauty, and uncertainty of fortune, had been reasons sufficient why her prudent lovers had hitherto declined to go beyond the limits of a modern flirtation; and the evident pleasure with which she received Lord Edgermond's attentions, still further contributed to rob her of the inestimable privilege of rejection. She had *tact* enough to perceive a something beyond mere admiration in young Osborne's face, and in addition to the *éclat* arising from his capture, she was not without hopes it might impel Lord Edgermond to believe she was not quite so easy of attainment as he seemed to imagine.

Vanity to Rosalind was a hydra with so many heads, that its extinction was impossible. She could not bear to suppose Lord Edgermond insensible to her many charms, and at length succeeded in persuading herself that his lordship's indifference was affected for the purpose of trying her attachment, or arose from an insolent belief, that she was perfectly attainable whenever he might choose to come forwards; and to arouse his security and fears was now her settled purpose.

After a lengthened visit of nearly an hour, Mr. Osborne and his cousin left Lady Wyedale's, and Evanmore, at Rosalind's request, prepared to drive her on the sands in his phaeton. There she expected to meet both her embryo lover and recreant knight, and hoped to have the opportunity of playing off one against the other.

Lady Wyedale announced her intention of calling upon an acquaintance, newly arrived on the Steyne, and as she did not invite Felicia to accompany her, she determined to seize the opportunity, afforded by her absence, of visiting the Berkelys. She had almost reached Mrs. Berkely's door, when she met Maria Berkely in her Bath chair, escorted by her brother. She thought Mr. Berkely's manner was reserved, and when she was ushered into Mrs. Berkely's presence felt assured she had not been mistaken. She looked unusually grave, and Miss Berkely continued her needle-work after the compliments of the morning had passed without speaking.

"I wished to express my regret at not having had it in my power to join you last night," said Felicia, half afraid Mrs. Berkely might esteem her behaviour rude.

"You were near us several times," said Mrs. Berkely.

"But I had no opportunity of doing so, though I much wished it," said Felicia.

Mrs. Berkely looked steadfastly at her. Felicia's was a face that might easily be read, and Mrs. Berkely felt all her former confidence revive.

"I do not doubt you, my dear young friend," said she. "When we are in company we cannot always do as we would wish. I own I felt a little hurt at your seeming neglect, and I fear you perceived it; but that gravity you have observed, arises principally from the information I have this morning unexpectedly received, that my poor Maria is in more immediate danger than I had apprehended." Her voice faltered, and Miss Berkely wept aloud. "Sophia," said she, in a gentle tone, "go to your sister, and prevail upon her to accompany you in a walk. The air will be of service to you both, and I wish for some conversation with Miss Leycester." Miss Berkely immediately left the room, and Mrs. Berkely, taking Felicia's hand, said, "I believe our stay here will be short. I am, therefore, happy to have the opportunity of telling you, that those favourable sentiments with which I was inclined to view the adopted child of my lamented friend, have been confirmed by intimacy. Under these circumstances, I particularly lament that, in all human probability, we shall never more meet in this world; at least, for any length of time. As a married woman you will have little leisure to perform distant journeys, or pay long visits; and I am so far advanced in the vale of life, that I ought to consider every day I pass on earth an especial gift of Heaven. Still, I am unwilling to think that all intercourse must cease between us, and have long been desirous of expressing my wish to see you at Elm Grove previous to your union. The indisposition of my Maria will, I am aware, throw a gloom over your visit, but it may be one which will tend to increase your present desire after virtue, and still further prepare you for that trial Maria is now undergoing."

It had been Mrs. Beauchere's anxious desire, while nurturing every feminine feeling, strengthening all those tender sympathies of which Felicia's mind was unusually susceptible, to repress everything that bordered on sickly sentiment, or encourage a proneness to that sensibility which is more often the occasion of pain to its possessor than an advantage to mankind; and though Felicia spoke through starting tears, she endeavoured to suppress her own emotions, that she might not increase the anguish which she saw struggling at the heart of Mrs. Berkely. She expressed her happiness at the idea of spending some little time at Elm Grove; and, anxious to administer consolation to a mother under such a calamity, ventured to hint her hopes, that Miss Maria Berkely's complaints were not of so serious a nature as she apprehended.

Mrs. Berkely shook her head. "It is in vain to hope against certainty, my dear Miss Leycester—my Maria must leave us; but she will not leave us without that consolation, which assuages the anguish of such partings. She is a Christian! I shall watch that lovely form I have for years seen, with perhaps too much pride, droop—languish—and die. But,—

“ To man, in this, his trial state,
The privilege is given,
When tost by tides of human fate,
To anchor fast on Heaven.”

My Maria has availed herself of this privilege; and, though I shall see her earthly part committed to the tomb, I know her spirit will instantly ascend to its kindred skies. Oh, Miss Leicester!” she continued, the tears she had been so long trying to suppress streaming over her pale face, “this is, indeed, a heavy trial; to part with a child so lovely! so amiable! Yet how much deeper would be my agony, did I not know, that the very virtues which have thus entwined themselves around the hearts of her family, and render her loss still greater, secure her own happiness! Yes, it is my consolation, and the only one that bears me up under this dispensation, that I ever endeavoured to make my children sensible, that they were here only travellers to another country—that the world ought neither to be the goal of their hopes, nor entered upon as a scene of pleasure; and I have already received a part of my reward. Only this morning I learnt that Maria’s illness was of such a nature she could not survive many months, and I resolved to inform her immediately of her situation, that she might not lose a moment of that time now so peculiarly precious. I knew that my child, from her age, amiable disposition and situation, had none of the deeper crimes of the world to deplore; but while it was a task that almost shook my frame to dissolution, I dared not incur the heavy responsibility of deceiving her at such a time—of robbing her, by my selfish grief, of the opportunity of *brightening* her crown of glory. Death is an awful visitant—even my Maria found it so: she requested her brother to carry her to her room, and desired to be left alone till she rang her bell. He silently obeyed her wishes, and we spent in grief that time she was employed in teaching the feelings of shuddering nature to submit to the doom of mortality. In a few hours the fluttered spirit was lulled to resignation, and after tenderly thanking me for the fortitude I had evinced, she requested her brother would accompany her in her usual airing on the shore. My child I now therefore consider rather as the inhabitant of another world, than as a denizen of this; and in her patient submission to the will of Heaven, I find a melancholy pleasure that almost reconciles me to the deprivation of her society.”

Felicia was much affected by this pious acquiescence in so severe a visitation. She had never visited the Berkelys without feeling them rise in her estimation, and, tears still trembling in her eyes, she reluctantly returned home.

The prospect of a visit to Mrs. Berkely was extremely agreeable to her; for seven of the twelve months, which she had determined should elapse after Mrs. Beaucherc’s death, ere she became a wife, remained unexpired; and in defiance of her wish to render

Lady Wyedale every dutiful attention, her incessant complainings and ill-humour were so wearisome, that she contemplated a little escape from them with peculiar satisfaction. The sound of Rosalind's voice in high glee as she ascended the stairs, and the sight of Lady Wyedale's face composed into an expression bordering on good-humour, gave her encouragement to communicate where she had been, and to express her hopes that Lady Wyedale would permit her to accompany Mrs. Berkely to Elm Grove early the next week. When she accepted Mrs. Berkely's invitation, she was not without fear that she should hear much of an unpleasant nature from Lady Wyedale on its being announced, but had never anticipated the possibility of her ladyship's refusing to sanction her visit: she was consequently much mortified when her ladyship exclaimed, every feature dark as Erebus, "I am really astonished how you could think of accepting such an invitation, aware as you are of my invincible dislike to that woman; and I insist upon it you do not go with her to Elm Grove. You know Elm Grove is only three miles from the Lodge, and if you were to spend a few months with her there, it must lay me under an obligation to her, and bring on an intimacy I have been for years trying to discourage."

Felicia cast an imploring look at Rosalind; but Rosalind was not in the smallest degree induced to second her cause. She was sensible that if Felicia left them, she could not as now partake of every amusement without restraint or reproach.

Rosalind's natural feelings were warm, generous, and affectionate; but intercourse with the gay world had already blunted their finest edge; and though far from destitute of *bienveillance*, she knew not how to tread the rugged path of self-denial, even for Felicia's sake.

"I am a little astonished at your extreme attachment to these said Berkelys," she observed, seeing her sister's chagrin, "who belong to the class of mighty good people; in my opinion, just the most disagreeable beings in the whole universe. It is not only that their own peculiarities render them beyond measure stupid, but they must be so outrageously virtuous to keep up the farce—so shocked at the sins of others, and so little hurt at their own—so lynx-eyed to perceive the heinous offence of going to a ball, so insensible to that of backbiting and slandering their neighbours!"

"Whenever I perceive in the Berkelys any of those distinguishing traits, which are, it seems, characteristic of the 'mighty good people,' my attachment will subside," said Felicia, for the first time hurt at Rosalind's refusing to comply with her wishes, and the continual efforts she made to lower her friends in the estimation of Evanmore, whose silence during this argument had been too expressive of his secret sentiments respecting her intended visit. She quitted the room as she spoke, and had just seated herself dejectedly in her own, when the door opened, and

Rosalind advanced with her hands held up in the attitude of supplication. Felicia turned aside her head as from the blandishment of a syren.

"Philly," she cried, squeezing herself into the half of her sister's chair, and folding her arms around her waist, "let not your righteous spirit be disturbed because I don't love the Berkelys. Even when that most delectable *morceau* of goodness, John, was a kind of lover of mine, I——"

"Oh, that he were one now!" said Felicia, unable any longer to feel resentment against one so beloved and so captivating.

"Indeed, I do not: I should by no means wish anything so wondrous wise to be related to me. A man that is neither a Solomon nor a saint, is much more calculated for such every day mortals as myself. Depend upon it, my dear, something more like your spouse elect is better designed to make matrimony agreeable. One might hope to acquire the dominion of such a one by a little judicious contrivance: seeming, for instance, to consult him (though all the while predetermined to have one's own way)—or by a well-timed explosion, now and then, on a great occasion much may be done. But Berkely! he would be proof against flattery, foolery, and fire. Such sturdy reasoners and moralists are neither to be led nor driven, as the old adage expresses,—downright obstinacy!"

The praises of those we love are more grateful than the most refined flattery bestowed on ourselves; and yet this seemingly disinterested, generous feeling may spring from a selfish motive. We are delighted to think that our opinion is confirmed by that of the world, our admiration sanctioned by that of our friends, and when we find the object of affection sinks in the scale of excellence, we feel a sensation of personal degradation. Felicia listened to these observations with mingled pain and astonishment. That Evanmore was, in Rosalind's estimation, "neither a Solomon nor a saint," was not, indeed, deserving of a moment's consideration; but still she had been so much in the habit of regarding him as a superior being, that she learnt, with secret surprise, he had failed to impress Rosalind with the same sentiments.

"Nay, don't look so dismal, my dear Philly," said Rosalind, whose quickness enabled her in a moment to perceive that she had suddenly and unpleasantly taught Felicia to know her lover was not, as she had delighted to fancy him,—entire perfection; "what I have said was merely to reconcile you to something more human than Berkely; and, I verily believe, you will be far happier with the one than the other. There should be no rivalry in matrimony. Now, Evanmore, though excessively good, and almost a saint, is not quite one, therefore there can be no competition between you. But Berkely—he is a shining light; in time each might fear that the dazzling rays of the other would throw a shade of obscurity on self; and diminished glory neither could

like. The most brilliant lustre admits of being heightened by a foil, you know ; don't therefore lament that poor Evanmore is a mere mortal man, for be assured he will admire your perfection the more ; nor be angry with me for the hints I have just given you how to manage him. They emanated from the pure Christian principle of doing as I would be done by, and to promote the good old cause transmitted from mother to daughter since the days of Madam Eve — at all events the generosity of my conduct is entitled to your gratitude, for I had no hope of reward — no — not the least of ever having any return of a similar nature from you ; for I know you think it right in women to obey their husbands ; and, without flattery, I esteem you to be so very an angel that I do — yes, I really do believe you will act up to your principles even on that point."

"Oh, Rosalind," cried Felicia, "that I could make you more serious on serious subjects — that I could render you sensible that you will idly hope to experience happiness yourself, or meet it in your husband, while you thus treat the most sacred topics with levity, and seem to esteem virtue in him to whom you would unite your fate, of no moment!"

"I dare say you do ; but the fact is, that the time for instilling all those principles by which you are actuated is past. — We were differently brought up — you were taught to regard virtue as the only source of happiness ; I, on the contrary, that carriages, servants, affluence, consequence, constitute the *summum bonum* of felicity ; and that a coronet is an *elixir vite* for all the ills of life. My aunt Beaucherc, in short, educated you for the next world ; my aunt Wyedale, me for this : it remains to be seen which of the two systems will best conduce to the future happiness of each godchild ; and as, beyond a shadow of doubt, I am not so good as yourself, would it not be unreasonable and presumptuous in me to aspire to anything half so amiable as your *caro sposo* must, it seems, be ? I own, if my lord and master makes me a kind husband, I shall be satisfied."

"What is your definition of a kind husband ?" said Felicia.

"Kind ! why, perhaps I do not attach to it so comprehensive a meaning as you may ; but I shall be contented, after the honeymoon (or treaclemoon, as Byron designated it) is over, to find him like most other women's kind husbands ; that is, complacent, good-tempered, generous, unsuspicious, and the like ; and in return, I will be gay in spirits, decent in my deportment, tolerably circumspect in my private affairs, and not over curious or prying into his. — Why, you look so disconsolate, I almost dread to leave you, for fear of your committing *felo-de-se*. Come along with me ! and if you cannot achieve a visit to the Berkelys, at least have the satisfaction of looking surly at Auntie Wyedale : there is some pleasure in that, after a defeat ; and as to lamenting that I am what I am, your grief is, be assured, just as well placed as that of the old woman who, when she had exhausted every

other source of distress, sat down and wept for the sins of the Bishops."

CHAP. XIII.

"Oh, Memory ! in thy magic glass
What various scenes and objects pass !
Retentive maid ! thine is the power
To brighten or o'ercast the hour."

THERE was a witchery in Rosalind's manner that acted as a talisman to disarm resentment ; and though each day tended to confirm Felicia in the belief that she was widely different from what she had fondly expected her, she knew not how to think harshly of errors whose source so evidently lay in a defective education ; and convinced that levity, not ill-will, had excited her momentary displeasure, she dismissed it as hastily as it had been awakened. But she could not so readily banish from her remembrance the unpleasing recollection, that Evanmore was considered by Rosalind in a very opposite point of view from what she had imagined. She knew Rosalind to be unusually quick in developing character, and she had hoped, though Evanmore's compliance with all her whims had secured her attachment, she did not esteem him less firm in principle, or steady in virtue, than Berkely himself. She had for some time seen Evanmore escort Rosalind to every varied scene of amusement with sensations that occasionally bordered on regret ; because she half feared what he now performed from a mere desire to oblige her sister and ingratiate himself with Lady Wyedale, might ultimately tend to give him a taste for such amusements, and incapacitate him for the quiet enjoyments of a life spent in the privacy of domestic peace. Still she had been unwilling to encourage this apprehension, lest it might deprive Rosalind of a protector, or arise from a source different to that to which she traced it. She knew the heart to be deceitful above all things ; and an indistinct feeling of mortification, which once or twice thrilled through her heart on hearing Evanmore's rapturous praises of Rosalind's beauty, made her blush, from the apprehension that a little, petty, jealous desire of exclusive admiration and attention might be the origin of what she wished to ascribe to anxiety for Evanmore ; and she had, therefore, carefully refrained from breathing or indulging the most remote suspicion that Evanmore himself was a willing sharer in Rosalind's pleasures. For the first time she now slowly admitted this unwelcome truth, and reflected, with some uneasiness, on a remark of Mrs. Berkely's, which had not at that time excited a moment's surprise or alarm. When expressing her desire, at their last parting, that Felicia should accompany her

to Elm Grove, she said, "And in that case Mr. Evanmore will surely return home." Her manner was unimportant, but a meaning might lurk in her words which she had then been too much blinded by affection to penetrate. Was it possible that Mrs. Berkely, like Rosalind, might not see in him that firmness of virtue it had been her pride to believe he possessed? Was it improbable that she had perceived in his manner a something that led her to believe he had experienced too much satisfaction in accompanying Rosalind to those scenes of attraction of which she was so fond; and wished to learn that he would fly them when she was no longer the companion of her sister? She wept from shame and vexation, as her recoiling mind reluctantly assented to these mortifying questions; and she determined, since Lady Wyedale's petulance precluded her from accepting Mrs. Berkely's invitation, she would carefully watch over Evanmore's conduct in future; and should she perceive he was indeed becoming too fond of scenes which prudence and principle equally required he should only occasionally frequent, she would conquer her unwillingness to give him a moment's uneasiness, and fairly point out the error into which his good-natured wish to oblige his intended sister-in-law might lead him. Having come to this determination, she resolved to banish from her bosom every unpleasant remembrance, and without suffering either her spirits or her judgment to be influenced by the past, keep a calm, impartial eye on the future. But a system of *espionnage* is one of all others offensive to a generous mind; and that doubt which prompts it, of all others inimical to real happiness in the bosom of a lover. Without scarcely knowing why, Felicia felt her spirits imperceptibly decline. Vainly she tried to shake off this unaccountable depression.

"I have no reason to feel dejected," she sometimes reasoned with herself; "Evanmore is as attached to me as when first he solicited my affections; and the nearer we approach to that period which will unite us in an indissoluble union, the dearer, I feel, he becomes to me. Why, then, should I suffer my mind to be overclouded with unreasonable apprehensions of I know not what?" Alas! Felicia was too little acquainted with the secret workings of the heart, to penetrate into the cause of that weight she vainly tried to shake off. She knew not that the hour which lifted from her mental vision the veil affection had fondly spread over him she loved,—the hand which first pointed out the failings of one she had delighted to think perfection, produced that change of feeling she deplored. Love, like self, is no impartial judge; and those who are not careful to detect its subtlety, will often be led to rank almost as virtues in the beloved object, what in others would, without hesitation, be considered as errors. Felicia had strong principles, good abilities, and natural quickness of perception—but she was *scarcely twenty-one*—had warm affections, and an unsuspicious temper. All that education could give,

all that wisdom could impart, she had received ; but neither education, nor the experience of others, can extinguish the fervid romance of a young enthusiastic spirit ; and though Mrs. Beauclerc, with a smile, often told her she must not expect to find on a closer intimacy with Evanmore all those splendid virtues and that unshaken principle with which she delighted to endow him, she could not bring herself to believe he would ever fall short of the elevation she had assigned him, or deceive her expectations. Evanmore she had known almost from childhood ; for during an indisposition of Mrs. Beauclerc's, they had each spent a month at the house of a mutual acquaintance ; and when in after-life they continued occasionally to meet, every interview seemed to confirm their juvenile attachment. They appeared, indeed, designed for a closer and dearer intercourse ; for Evanmore, besides all those personal attractions which are calculated to win affection, possessed a high reputation, and seemed, even on those graver subjects which are so seldom an object of reflection to young men, to entertain the same opinions as his Felicia. Long had he been the secret object of Felicia's regard, before he ventured to solicit she would crown his affection ; and when at length their union received the sanction of her aunt, Felicia felt as if worldly misfortune could never be a visitor at her door. She loved him with that purity, that devotedness, which a first affection is apt to awaken. No obstacles had arisen to damp the ardour of her attachment : his image had been the first imprinted on her glowing heart, and she believed death only could obliterate it. Nor was Evanmore undeserving of her love, for he returned it with scarcely less warmth ; and though he was not the perfect being she deemed him, the weak points of his character had a tendency so amiable, that they eluded the eye of those who witnessed his many virtues, and always mitigated the severity of reproof even when perceived. Evanmore was, in truth, an assemblage of all that renders man dear and estimable ; but his lustre was darkened by a few shades impervious to the dazzled sight of love. He had not that firmness and stability of character which *ensures* perseverance in the path of rectitude ; but possessed a morbid sensibility that made almost death appear less intolerable to him than the laugh or sneer of an acquaintance. When attachment to Felicia impelled him to leave his paternal mansion, and take lodgings in London, to beguile away the twelve months which Felicia deemed it respectful to the memory of an almost parent should elapse ere their union took place, he thought he should never become even reconciled to the habits of Felicia's gay relations, and panted for the time to arrive when they would mutually escape from the unrelenting ill-humour of Lady Wyedale, and the unceasing dissipation of her house. But Evanmore, like ductile wax, easily received an impression from those with whom chance or circumstances threw him in contact ; and after a few weeks spent in the pursuit of pleasure, with Rosa-

lind for his companion, he began to think his new mode of existence not so very irksome, though he still looked forward to his emancipation with delight. A few months removed all but his wish to find himself the husband of Felicia—there he remained firm and consistent. He esteemed her the most amiable of women; and though hurt at discovering that she possessed not the shining beauty of her sister, his love and his good sense equally conspired to render her still the sole object of his affections. Once or twice he was not, indeed, quite sure, whether she would not be more agreeable if more like Rosalind in manner; and once or twice he had felt a latent emotion, somewhat resembling alarm, lest that strict piety and that keen sense of decorum which so often exposed her to Rosalind's raillery, might not be carried a little too far. But these were those momentary feelings and opinions which are infused, we know not how, into the mind, and rejected with disdain as soon as they become perceptible to our reason. The depression of spirits under which she laboured he at length perceived, but he ascribed it to Lady Wyedale's harshness, united to her seclusion from those amusements which, he had now learnt to think, were essential to the happiness of young persons, and influenced by this idea, entreated her to join Rosalind and himself more frequently than she had previously done.

Felicia heard him with fond attention; but the remedy he proposed had not the effect he desired: she had, however, too much native sweetness of temper to meet these proofs of his attachment without corresponding marks of reciprocal regard, and too much good sense, when she refused compliance with his wishes, unequivocally to assign her real motives. She knew that those who wish to *succeed on such points* should try the power of persuasion and the force of argument, veiled from the sight, but naked to the understanding, before they have recourse to those stronger measures which may disgust by their unpalatableness. She was sensible that even *love* cannot fetter *opinion*; though, judiciously exerted, it most commonly influences it; and, that the least exercise of authority is sure to strengthen what reasoning may probably annihilate. A scrutiny of a few weeks' duration had convinced her, that Evanmore was not a reluctant partaker of Rosalind's joys; and fearing lest too rigid an adherence to her own sentiments might defeat her wishes, she consented to accompany him three or four times to different scenes of public amusement.

Evanmore was gratified by her acquiescence; and as she always appeared to enjoy the evening on such occasions nearly as much as Rosalind, he flattered himself time would render her as fond of plays, balls, and concerts as he desired. Felicia, in the mean time, omitted no opportunity of gently representing that such scenes ought to be partaken of only with great moderation, lest their frequency should vitiate the taste for simpler enjoy-

ments, and induce a gradual inclination for expensive pleasures, alike incompatible with their residence in a retired village and limited fortune. But Evanmore listened at first without seeming to comprehend her meaning, and when he was at length helped to it by the ready Rosalind, he only felt some additional uneasiness lest Felicia should push her practice so much beyond that of other people as to become particular; and next to actual positive sins, Evanmore had a horror of particularities. She did not, however, interfere with him; and he felt he had no right to question a line of conduct which might arise from Lady Wyedale's indisposition, and, as she often told him, from a disinclination to mingle frequently in those crowds where Rosalind, to use her own language, only lived.

While these were the sentiments and views of Felicia and her lover, Rosalind was continuing her attack on Mr. Osborne with distinguished success. No blandishments, however, could soften Lord Edgermond's heart—no prospect of a rival rouse the apathetic indifference with which he seemed to see her; and, exasperated, astonished, and mortified, Rosalind at length began to resign all hope of adorning her brows with his envied coronet. As this hope died away, Mr. Osborne grew a more estimable conquest; and daily, hourly, she expected he would solicit her hand, with a feeling of disappointment at his delay, which augured not unfavourably for his suit. But day succeeded day, still Mr. Osborne forbore to announce himself a captive, though his attentions were of such a nature as left no doubt of his intentions. He was, in short, unwilling to expose himself to being laughed at as a rejected admirer, and, with the natural diffidence of a real lover, almost apprehensive he should scarcely be deemed a sufficient match for a woman so very beautiful, highly connected, and the presumptive heiress to Lady Wyedale's large fortune. He was, therefore, resolved to be certain of her affection ere he ventured to declare his passion; and his caution, though from different motives, was warmly commended by his cousin, Mrs. Hustleton. A few months ago she would have opposed his marrying her young enemy Rosalind Leycester by every effort malice or ingenuity could devise; because she not only personally disliked her, but knew Lady Wyedale's capricious temper too well not to feel certain that dependence on her stability of purpose was to count on the continuance of the passing wind. But Rosalind's avowal of independence from Mrs. Beauclerc, together with Lady Wyedale's marked preference of her to Felicia, had produced a considerable change in her sentiments. She now began to believe Rosalind would really inherit her ladyship's possessions; and was aware, that as such, she must be esteemed a most advantageous connection for her relation. Mr. Osborne was her favourite cousin, for he was her richest and greatest, and from that principle, which too often impels us to press on the prosperous those gifts we should never think of offering to the needy, she had

previously felt a strong desire to add her fortune to his. The prospect of so gratifying an alliance decided her views in his favour. She was not insensible to the consequence such a union would reflect upon herself; and by dexterously holding out this golden bait, she felt that Rosalind's propensity to satirise her would be held in check; besides which, regard to her own personal importance would impel her to conceal all that might tend to lower her husband's family. Her fears, therefore, hushed, and her vanity awakened by the prospect of Lady Wyedale's heiress becoming her relation, she saw Rosalind's acceptance of his attentions with secret pride and delight; and only recommended, that Mr. Osborne should not avow himself before he had secured a place in her heart, lest his precipitancy might throw away his present hopes of success.

While such were the motives that influenced the conduct of Rosalind and her humble adorer, Lady Wyedale received an invitation to a grand private ball given by a personage of the first importance. Her ladyship's vanity proved too strong for the dictates of reason, and in despite of her indisposition, she resolved to *chaperone* Rosalind herself. The discontinuance of Lord Edgermond's attentions had been perceived by her with almost as much pain as by her niece; and she was not without hopes his meeting her there, blazing with jewels and glowing in beauty, might induce him to make one effort to snatch the prize so likely to be wrested from him for ever, and spur him on to a decided offer of his coronet. These views secretly animated Rosalind's bosom also; and, like some able general, whose hopes of victory rest on one decisive engagement, she resolved to consolidate her forces, and employ them all on this important occasion.

All that art could supply to decorate a form on which nature had lavished her richest gifts, was exhausted; and, as she surveyed her captivating figure in a large Psyche, Rosalind felt a proud conviction that it would be impossible for Lord Edgermond to behold her with indifference. Her bosom throbbing with expectation, her heart elate with conscious beauty, she at length found herself in the scene of so much expected glory, and impatiently awaited his lordship's appearance. Some time elapsed ere he entered the room—some more before he seemed to be aware she was there; and a long period intervened between his bow of recognition, and a soft but formal

"Ah, Miss Rosalind! I am happy to see Lady Wyedale is sufficiently recovered to be here. Engaged, I suppose, for all the evening?" as he gracefully passed her to lead out a lovely young woman to a quadrille.

Rosalind's blood rushed from her heart to her cheeks, and circled there again with a feeling of coldness that instantly damped its former warmth. In the ease with which he addressed her, and *nonchalance* of his manner, she beheld the death-blow to her hopes; and, absorbed in mortification, saw not that the dances

were commenced without having been solicited to join the festive party. She soon however, awoke to a sense of the indignity she had received, and burning with blushes of shame and indignation, panted for the conclusion of that evening she had been so impatiently anticipating. Rosalind was, indeed, for the first time, doomed to experience personal slight. In the elevated sphere of which she was now a member, she had few acquaintance; and, beautiful as she was, she found herself surrounded by a host of rivals whose rank as well as charms entitled them to a greater share of attention than even herself. Before the evening concluded, she had indeed several opportunities of dancing; but her spirit had been too much wounded by Lord Edgermond's indifference, and a previous sense of neglect, to permit her to recover from her mortification. She had been that most melancholy lonely creature known among young people by the appellation of a "wallflower;" and, incensed at Lord Edgermond, degraded in her own estimation, left the room a prey to as much misery as can be felt by those who are innocent of having committed any crime.

After a sleepless night she arose, found Mr. Osborne at the breakfast-table, more obsequious, more devoted than on any previous occasion; and, despairing of ever subduing Lord Edgermond, doubtful for the first time of the omnipotency of her charms, she accepted the offer he had the good fortune at that moment to tender.

CHAP. XIV.

"She never knew, nor sought to know,
Of faith sincere the grateful glow."

LADY WYEDALE was secretly displeased with Rosalind's unexpected acceptance of Mr. Osborne. She had not been averse to her having the *éclat* of such an admirer; but, as it was her secret intention to make her the heiress of her fortune, she felt disappointed that she should, at nineteen, consent to unite herself to a man whose personal consequence was inferior to her own, and whose fortune, though a large one, not more considerable than Rosalind's at her death. But this was an objection she could not make without declaring her intentions in Rosalind's favour; and her ladyship was so jealous a lover of that prudent caution which leaves unfettered caprice to pursue its vacillating humours, that she would not for the world have done more than give a sort of ambiguous hint, that, "if Rosalind behaved well, and nothing induced her to alter her present intention, she believed she would have cause to remember her with gratitude." But this, she felt aware, was not quite enough to induce Rosalind to relinquish a man in an honourable profession — possessed of two thousand

a year of his own, with the hope of more in perspective. Unable, therefore, to assign any plausible reason for her opposition, yet determined not to bind herself, by avowing the one that influenced her, she gave a surly consent to Mr. Osborne's application; and found her only consolation for this mortification in increased petulance and augmented lamentations of growing indisposition.

"Philosophers tell us, every evil has its remedy, every poison its antidote; but your aunt knows no remedy for the ills of life, but complaint," said Evanmore, one day, to Felicia.

"Alas! she looks not beyond this world for consolation. Can we therefore wonder? Dear Evanmore," she continued, fondly placing her hand on his arm, "let not the awful lesson be taught us in vain. If we permit our affections to be engrossed by the pleasures and pursuits of this transitory sphere, we, like my poor aunt, shall soon cease to look for any other; and, as they gradually fade away from our grasp, become the victims of peevishness and discontent."

Like as a wandering hand playing among the strings of a harp unwittingly strikes some chord to which the heart responds with sudden thrill, so was Evanmore affected by this appeal.

"True, my dear Felicia. I trust we shall never omit any known duty; but indeed, my love, I almost fear you are carrying your religious scruples too far. Religion was never intended to circumscribe the innocent enjoyments of the world; and surely there cannot be a more rational or a more pleasing amusement than a good play, or a lively ball; yet you know you refused to accompany your aunt, sister, and myself to the theatre last night; and though you did not assign any other reason than disinclination, I know you declined merely from a superstitious motive."

"I had been, you must remember, the week before."

"But then only in compliance with my earnest request."

"Granted. And did that diminish the pleasure you felt at my assent?"

"No," said he, tenderly taking her hand, as he saw a tear start to her eye. "But I own I could almost have wished that on such a point my Felicia had required no entreaties."

"I had not intended to allude to my sentiments on these topics, nor am I at all competent to enter into a controversial vindication of them; but I will reply to you in the language of one whose splendid talents and exemplary conduct justly render her a luminous beacon to guide the rest of her sex.

"If some things which are apparently innocent, and do not assume an alarming aspect, or bear a dangerous character,—things which the generality of decorous people affirm (how truly we know not) to be safe for them; yet if we find that these things stir up in us improper propensities; if they awaken thoughts which ought not to be excited; if they abate our love for religious exercise, or infringe on our time for performing them; if they make spiritual concerns appear insipid; if they wind our heart a little

more about the world ; in short, if we have formerly found them injurious to our souls, then let no example or persuasion, no belief of their alleged innocence, no plea of their perfect safety, tempt us to indulge in them. It matters little to our security what they are to others. Our business is with ourselves. Our responsibility is on our own heads. Others cannot know the side on which we are assailable. Let our own unbiassed judgment determine our opinion ; let our own experience decide for our own conduct ? ”*

“ Now, my dearest Evanmore, after seriously giving these striking remarks my unprejudiced consideration, I thought it my duty, as much as I could, to avoid, without singularity, all public amusements ; for I have found them too delightful to be wholly innocent. After my return from such scenes, my mind has been too much engrossed by the events of the evening to allow me to perform my devotional exercises with the same unbroken attention I usually discharge them ; and in the morning fatigue generally produces the same effect. Even through the succeeding day, the glare of the lights, the sound of the music, the pleasures of the scene, still retain so much power over my senses, that I turn with distaste from the sober employments of my station. Ought I then often to partake of what may indeed be *safe for others*, but which experience tells me is dangerous to *me* ? ”

“ Well, my love, far be it from me to urge you to do anything you esteem wrong,” said he, with a half-suppressed yawn. “ Still, however, I lament that your feelings are so little in unison with those of the world in general. Nor can I help thinking even the passage you have quoted savours a little too strongly of Calvinistic austerity.”

“ Oh, Evanmore, do not say so ! ” cried Felicia, her face for the first time expressing something like displeasure. “ Remember the happiness we all enjoyed while you read aloud *Cœlebs* to my dear aunt and myself, and how entirely you then coincided in all her sentiments and views.”

“ Did I ? Well, I believe I might. But you know, dearest Felicia, we were then very young ; and though Mrs. Beauchere was undoubtedly a most excellent woman, yet I conceive she carried her practice farther than was absolutely necessary,—certainly beyond that of any other person ; and let us not be uncharitable enough to believe no one can be saved unless they are equally perfect ; because that would be to condemn to misery more than half our fellow-creatures. Surely the gates of Heaven are not so narrow ? Let us hope we shall all meet again, though we do not exactly pursue the same path ; ” and with this hope, the rock on which thousands have been lost, the argument ended ; for Rosalind hastily interrupted it, to request Evanmore would drive her on the sands to see a donkey-race, on which large sums were betted by two gentlemen, who had so much money they knew not how to contrive common methods of getting rid of it.

* *Vide* Practical Piety, p. 126.

In the fond, respectful attentions of Mr. Osborne, and the novelty incident to her situation in being for the first time the acknowledged arbitress of the fate of man, Rosalind derived some consolation under Lord Edgermond's desertion. Even the servile adulation of Mrs. Hustleton, and the prospect of succeeding to her fortune, were not without their attractions.

"Well, after all," said she one morning, when Mrs. Hustleton's flatteries had soothed her into that complacency which Lord Edgermond's behaviour had lately somewhat disturbed, "I really believe she is not a bad-hearted woman. We have all our faults, and to be sure she is very curious, very prosy, and very tenacious of attention, perhaps more than, all things considered, she has a strict right to expect; but she is now independent; and in a commercial country like England, trade is no disgrace, and riches a passport to every society. Besides, from what I hear, now that I know more of the family history, she is better born than I supposed. She was, it seems, an orphan, and her relations ought to have come forward earlier to prevent the little blot in her escutcheon of pretence which I have hinted at to you. Neither was her fortune acquired by her own exertions, although that should be no real disgrace after all, but received from a near relation of great consideration in India. Sometimes, to be sure, she has provoked me a little I own; but then you know, Felicia, one ought not to cherish resentful feelings." And as she uttered this truism, she looked so satisfied with the explanation and apology she had offered for the change in her sentiments, that Felicia could scarcely repress the indulgence of a quiet, good-natured laugh.

"How deceitful and ingenious is self-love!" she thought: "my poor Rosalind is so little habituated to examine her motives, she thinks she is exercising a Christian virtue, when the fact is simply, that her engagement to Mr. Osborne is the sole cause of that sudden revolution in her ideas which induces her to view, without her usual contempt, foibles she has so often held up to ridicule."

Though she had failed to impose upon her sister as to her motives, Rosalind was indeed quite deceived herself. Little habituated to analyse her reasons or examine her own heart, she would have started with indignation and astonishment, had any one attempted to prove, that when she condescended to conciliate Lady Wyedale after a quarrel, or felt any sudden alteration in her opinions, the change had been brought about by any but the most amiable, disinterested views. She was perfectly unconscious that her new interests and instinctive hope of Mr. Osborne's eventual heirship influenced this change in Mrs. Hustleton's favour, and she ran on descanting upon the sin of unforgiveness, the folly of bearing malice; till, as she advanced in her dissertation, warmed by the vehemence of her own eloquence, she proceeded to take up the cudgels in Mrs. Hustleton's defence; and, on the somewhat doubtful authority of Mr. Osborne, brought

forward an array of so many merits that they quite overbalanced the heavy load of imperfections which she had formerly laid to Mrs. Hustleton's charge. Felicia felt rejoiced that Rosalind, according to her general custom, required her merely to look at her to be satisfied they were carrying on a conversation; for though she was resolved not to controvert what she knew it would be Rosalind's interest to think true, she felt uninclined to add her praises to those so undeservedly lavished on Mrs. Hustleton, if all that Rosalind had previously told her bore the faintest stamp of veracity. Rosalind, however, on this occasion, was not disposed to rest satisfied with mute acquiescence; and when she had finished explaining away Mrs. Hustleton's former errors, disguising those which, in spite of her wish to think otherwise, she knew could not be concealed, and magnifying the good qualities she had persuaded herself she really did possess, she looked at Felicia with an eye that expressed her expectation of hearing some rejoinder. Felicia was silent.

"We must forget and forgive the failings of our friends, if we wish to have any," said she, in a half-reproachful tone.

"Certainly," said Felicia, happy to be able to give her cordial concurrence here, at least.

But Rosalind was not contented; something she thought lurked behind; and never thinking it probable that Felicia might find some little difficulty in thus suddenly reconciling her mind to the contrary accounts she had so often received of her future relative, she left the room a little displeased to dress for a party at Mrs. Hustleton's, given in honour of her intended union—persuaded that, whilst "dearest Felicia was the very best of her tribe, even she was imbued, in some degree, with that great error of religious people—want of every kind of charity but that portion which St. Paul himself said was the least—alms-giving."

The amazement with which Felicia at first beheld this flagrant instant of self-delusion, at length gave way to the conviction that these laboured encomiums on a woman so lately the object of her unqualified dislike, must be used to disguise from herself her secret consciousness from whence they sprung, and justify a sudden partiality which she feared might be ascribed to some hidden and less honourable motive. At all events, she viewed it as a proof that Rosalind seriously meant to fulfil her engagement to Mr. Osborne, which she had hitherto doubted, and was, she trusted, indicative of a degree of regard for him which she had not before given her credit for feeling. For, in defiance of Rosalind's wish to appear gay and perfectly indifferent to Lord Edgermond's estrangement, her flushed cheek, when his name reached her ear, and embarrassed manner when they met, had conveyed to the anxious Felicia a suspicion that she still saw him with interest; and induced an apprehension, either that she would find means of dissolving her connection with Mr. Osborne, or would marry him from pique. Influenced by this consideration,

she had once or twice tried to penetrate into Rosalind's secret sentiments, but without success. Rosalind, gay, volatile, and good-humoured by nature, was not incapable of giving a "withering" look, or resenting what she deemed an impertinent question; and though she really loved Felicia, on this subject she would not endure to hear even her.

Artifice, and what are called deep strokes of worldly policy, often lead to consequences entirely unlooked for by their author. Lady Wyedale had no idea, when she thought it a profound piece of wisdom to weaken the cords of mutual confidence between the sisters, that she would be the first sufferer by the success of her stratagems. She would now have rejoiced at Felicia's possessing sufficient influence over her sister to deter her from forming an alliance with a man she evidently did not love, in revenge for having been slighted by one she did. But though Felicia's natural sensibility, strong understanding, gentle manners, and purity of design rendered her peculiarly calculated to act the part of a judicious counsellor, her ladyship's plot had too well succeeded to render her arguments, however effective, of the least weight with Rosalind. She loved Felicia, but she had been taught to esteem her a bigot, an enthusiast, and a person unacquainted with the manners and customs of genteel life in the nineteenth century; and though acquaintance removed a part of the prejudice which Lady Wyedale wished to infuse into her mind, she still considered her as an ascetic, whose visionary opinions on all worldly subjects it would be the acme of folly to be guided by.

It was now the close of autumn: October had commenced with a degree of severity that threatened a cold stormy winter, and most of the gay visitors of Brighton deserted its shores before Lady Wyedale acquired courage to commence her journey homewards. The effort she, however, felt must be made; and after many bitter lamentations, and many querulous complaints of the hardness of her destiny, she at length stepped into her splendid chariot, convinced, because she was beginning to be subject to the labour and sorrow which all must experience if they survive the period of youth, that she was the most unfortunate woman in the universe, and visited by sufferings and calamities which justly entitled her to render all around her miserable by her ill-humour and impatience.

CHAP. XV.

"Life is a waste of wearisome hours,
Which seldom the rose of enjoyment adorns!
And the heart that is soonest awake to the flowers,
Is always the first to be touched by the thorns."

FELICIA'S return to London was an event hailed by both Jenny and herself with the sincerest pleasure. The former had become

satiated with those delights which, alone, Rosalind declared she was capable of enjoying; and Felicia believed that a removal from the allurements of Brighton, united to her situation as an engaged woman, would not merely deprive Rosalind of the desire of mingling so much in public, but gradually alienate Evanmore from pleasures which, she feared, would hereafter render his residence in the country insipid, and give him a taste for expensive amusements which his fortune would be unable to gratify. But Felicia, from continually exercising the duty of self-examination, was a much better judge of her own character than that of others; and in both these opinions the result proved her totally mistaken. It is a commonly received notion, that those who are permitted to mingle in scenes of pleasure and dissipation will in time see their fallacy, and if they do not become weary of their evanescent attractions, at least learn to view them with such indifference that they become perfectly uninjurious. But on carefully investigating this opinion, does it appear founded in truth or experience? May not acquaintance with their splendours and enjoyments tend to increase the natural taste of man for luxury and all the soft blandishments of sense, rather than diminish his reluctance to partake of them? and, accustomed to such excitements, may not the mind (as the appetite fed on *piquant* sauces and high dishes at length loathes the plainness of food which has little more to recommend it than its wholesomeness) become disgusted with those quiet enjoyments which ignorance of any other might invest with greater power to gratify?

Rosalind and Evanmore, at all events, were no instances of its wisdom. Rosalind, who had been early initiated, was, indeed, to a certain degree palled by satiety, and had lost the high relish which novelty confers on every pleasure. But still they were preferable to the insupportable lassitude and *ennui* she endured while passing an evening at home. Their own attraction was gone, but they yet possessed power to awaken her vanity, and gratify that feverish thirst of admiration which continual flattery had made a constitutional disease of her mind; while Evanmore, delighted with their illusions, saw not their frivolity—feared not their danger.

The love of admiration—the desire of applause—is not exclusively confined to the fair sex; and Evanmore, though he tried to hide it from himself, was not wholly insensible to the attention which his graceful person, refined manners, and pleasing features procured him, when he escorted his future sister-in-law to scenes where such personal endowments are of higher importance than all the wisdom of all the ancients. A very few weeks, therefore, served to convince Felicia of the fallacy of her speculations, and with a heavy heart, she at length reluctantly admitted the idea, that Evanmore felt too much happiness in amusements she disapproved. It was combined with another scarcely less mortifying—more than he ought to feel out of her society. A glow, some-

thing like resentment, tinged her cheek as this reflection passed over her mind ; but resentment is not long retained against one on whom we sincerely depend for happiness ; and Felicia quickly endeavoured to dismiss from her bosom a sensation so injurious to her peace.

Winter, which Felicia had ever considered the season of particular happiness, was now set in, but came unattended with those peculiar delights which had hitherto rendered it dear to her. The howling of the storm, to which she used to listen with mingled feelings of romantic pleasure and of pious gratitude that she was preserved from its inclement blasts, was lost amid the din of the metropolis. The long evening, enlivened by the blazing fire and delightful book, or spent in the society of a few chosen friends, was now devoted to the garish joys of public places, or a heartless interchange of visits with persons who cared not whether to-morrow's dawn should consign each other to the grave. At Leominster Felicia had been taught to consider every hour a sacred gift from heaven, for which she must hereafter render a strict account ; but in the fashionable world she learnt, that to kill Time was the great purpose of life, and to banish the recollection of Him from whom it proceeded the highest proof of mental superiority. At Leominster she had been instructed to read a moral in each little flower, and cultivate, by every effort of her understanding, an acquaintance with her Creator. In London, it seemed the acme of human ingenuity to banish, in the pleasures of this world, the remembrance of the next.

As she made these observations, she tried to withdraw Evanmore yet more from scenes that she felt persuaded could afford no real happiness here, and might ultimately deprive him of the still higher joys that awaited him hereafter. But Evanmore had himself gradually learnt to regard her as a little of a devotee ; and though he would not for the world have knowingly given her a moment's pain, he thought her a little unreasonable in wishing to prevent him from participating in amusements which he considered innocent. The time was now fast arriving when they must be relinquished from necessity ; and, persuading himself it was his duty to discourage such foolish scruples in his wife, he met her half-expressed fears with smiles, or regrets, at her refusing to accompany him where he felt mentally determined to persist in going.

After instilling into Felicia's infant bosom a knowledge of the fundamental truths of Christianity, it had been Mrs. Beauclerc's chief care to implant a strong principle of active benevolence. She was no admirer of that sickly sensibility which exhausts itself in tears at a theatre, or in sighs over a romance ; and turned with contempt and disgust from those speculative theorists, who rest satisfied that they are the most benevolent of human beings because they wish impossibilities, and all mankind prosperous, without lightening by their exertions the weight of a single in-

dividual misery. Felicia's heart was naturally open as the day to melting charity; and under the judicious control of such a preceptress, her natural tendency was converted into a fixed and settled principle, which influenced her to embrace every opportunity of benefiting those to whom Providence, for wise, but inscrutable reasons, had been less bountiful than to herself. At Leominster she had never been at a loss for objects on whom to bestow the sum she yearly deducted from her little allowance of pocket-money; but in London, where she was a stranger, and apprehensive of misapplying that which she justly considered a deposit from heaven, she had found some difficulty in exercising this favourite virtue. She therefore deputed to Jenny the task of finding out some distressed family, from whose lips she might remove, if possible, a little of the bitterness of that cup of misfortune they were compelled to drink; and Jenny, not only instinctively inclined to all that is good, but, proud of the consequence thus reflected on herself, soon discovered various unhappy beings to whom her young mistress extended the hand of assistance. One of them was a poor woman labouring under an internal complaint, which required such continual support, that Felicia, unwilling to deprive herself of the opportunity of befriending any other, at length resolved to solicit Rosalind to unite with herself in affording her such aid as her situation demanded. She stated the case, and Rosalind instantly flew to the drawer in her cabinet, which contained her purse.

"Felicia!" cried she, suddenly turning towards her with an embarrassed air, "I am afraid you will think me a little *avaricieuse*, but really this is all I can give you," extending four or five shillings as she spoke. "I see you are disappointed, and so am I; for I was not before aware of the extent of my poverty. You are sceptical as to the fact, but see"—and she suspended her purse by the tassel at its bottom—"not a *sous* left in!"

"No, I am not sceptical," said Felicia; "I was only wondering what had become of the twenty pounds I saw in your possession a few days ago, and lamenting that my dear Rosalind does not appropriate some part of her liberal income to the distresses of her fellow-creatures."

"Cease to feel the vulgar sensation of amazement, then, and learn that the twenty pounds, with twenty more after it, went to purchase the lovely Geneva watch you so strenuously advised me *not* to make my own. I did not show it to you for that reason; but here it is; a little beauty! And as to appropriating a portion of my immense possessions, as you call an income that never half supplies my own wants, I must fairly tell you, though I never refuse to give when I happen to have the *sine qua non*, I really do not see alms-giving in the same light you do; and from experience can positively assert, that the poor are very ungrateful for what they do obtain."

"If you expect, in return for any chance casual act of gene-

rosity, the sentimental impassioned gratitude which you receive, after conferring some trifling favour on Mr. Osborne, you will be miserably disappointed; but if you can be content with the plain acknowledgments of sincerity, and the consciousness of doing your own duty, you will be amply gratified. Be assured the poor are seldom ungrateful for that steady attention to their wants which bespeaks a heart interested in their sufferings, though they may not clothe it in the elegant language, or adorn it with the finished periods and declamatory eloquence of——”

She paused; Rosalind supplied the chasm—“Lord Edgermond!—Well, don’t colour so! I know you were inadvertently led on by your eloquence to a forbidden topic, and I forgive it. Perhaps there may be some justice in your remarks: I am, however, afraid I shall never attain to such a pitch of perfection myself, as to incline me to make the necessary exertions to prove their truth. It would require so much fuss and trouble to entitle myself to their good opinion, that I should never find leisure for it.”

“Yet I seldom hear you complain of want of time to attend auctions, pay morning visits, shop when you don’t want to purchase, and——”

“Oh, admitted! admitted! I am aware I am no saint; but all lights are not guiding stars, and, perhaps, now and then a beacon may be as useful as a planet.”

“Heaven forbid that my Rosalind should be any other than a safe and honourable luminary,” said Felicia, while a tear dimmed her eye.

“Come, dearest Philly, don’t let my sins metamorphose thee into a Niobe. Besides, I assure you, I actually have some thoughts of being good by-and-bye. I am, indeed, positive I shall be fit for canonisation in ten years’ time, if I don’t marry, for it is the road to one species of fame, after the gates of another are shut, and I can never bear to be undistinguished even when old.”

“The road to fame!” repeated Felicia, in a tone of astonishment and concern. “Oh, Rosalind, where have you imbibed ideas so inimical to every right principle and feeling. Have we not a much stronger incentive to pursue the path of virtue; for is it not the way to heaven? In the consciousness that our feeble attempts to imitate the attributes of the Deity are pleasing to Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being, whose hand confers on us every blessing we enjoy, is there not the most refined happiness?”

“I can only answer you as I have often done before, by saying, on these topics we have not an idea in common—spiritually, we are denizens of two different worlds. I will, however, make one confession, and candidly acknowledge I have sometimes been half tempted to wish, when I view your serene countenance and tranquil composure, your elevation above the present scene, and your hopes of happiness in a future, I had been taught to think as you

do—led to expect, in another state of existence, a refuge from the calamities of this. But the thing is now impossible. Don't, therefore, weep, dear Philly, for in addition to the present distress it occasions me, I really dread to see you so very like an angel. You know there is an old adage about people being too good to live, and indeed you must not die, for it would grieve me more than I can describe, to lose you. How truly should I then say—" she paused a moment—her voice suddenly lost its lively expression, and she warbled with inimitable pathos and delicacy, in a low and plaintive air—

" 'The warmest heart—the brightest eye—
Is earliest doomed to love and die;
The sweetest, gentlest, and the best,
Seek earliest out the land of rest.
The noblest mind, the bravest spirit,
Is briefly doomed earth to inherit—
This world holds nought that's worth the trust
Of woman's love since thou art dust.' "

There was a liquid sweetness in her tones, a tremulousness in her broken notes, and a softness in her glittering eye, that showed the words were felt as well as sung. They were part of a ballad Felicia had often admired, and she sat motionless, till seemingly ashamed of the new character in which she appeared. Rosalind rapidly resumed her lost gaiety, and tapping her cheek, exclaimed, "If only to be the instrument of good to me, you must stay in this wicked world. What say you, Philly, to having me for a proselyte?"

"Oh, that I might!" cried Felicia, clasping her arms around her ivory neck. "Though every other earthly good should elude my grasp, I could live happily with such an object in view; and, when achieved, I could let the enfranchised spirit fly to its reward without a murmur, though it left me desolate and deserted."

"I should consider this from anybody else downright cant; but in you I know it is the *éloquence du cœur*, and I love you, my dear Felicia, more tenderly for the devotedness of your attachment. I advise you, however, to restrain these demonstrations of it as much as you can, for Lady Wyedale, who has lately become ten thousand times more disagreeable and tiresome than ever, seems just now particularly disposed to make you miserable; and as you can do no good to me, I wish you would not expose yourself, by your zeal, to her malevolent remarks."

Felicia received this caution as it was intended, and became more guarded in uttering those little indirect observations which she had hitherto often expressed with a view to effect what Rosalind told her, and she herself now began to fear, was hopeless. Lady Wyedale's increased unkindness to herself had not escaped her notice, or regret; and she vainly endeavoured to assign a cause for conduct so unprovoked and distressing. She knew her religious opinions were highly offensive to her ladyship, and had long endeavoured, by mixing in society, by uniform silence on

such subjects, and unvarying cheerfulness, to remove a part of her aunt's prejudices against them. She had never been able wholly to succeed; but, till within the last few weeks she had escaped open persecution. Now every topic, however begun, and however irrelevant, generally terminated with a dissertation on the absurdities and dangers of enthusiasm, and these provoking attacks were usually rendered more mortifying by being made in the presence of Evanmore.

"I am fond of music to excess," said Rosalind.

"Oh, pray don't love anything to excess," said Lady Wyedale. "Even our attachments and devotions should be under the dominion of reason."

"'Plous orgies, plous airs,
Decent sorrows, decent prayers.'"

"Miss Lucretia Beaumont is not deficient in her opinion of her own perfections, I think," said Evanmore one day.

"No," replied Lady Wyedale, "that is the error of the day. Young women acquire a smattering of knowledge on points with which it would be better if they were ignorant, and then, with the presumption of early years and inexperience, set up for lawgivers to the rest of the world."

"We should aim at perfection in whatever we attempt," said Felicia, patiently leaning over the chair of Rosalind, to whom she was endeavouring to give a lesson on some mystery of stitchery.

"Oh, dear, no!" said Lady Wyedale, "let us be satisfied with mediocrity. It is safer to walk in the valley, than climb the precipice. Besides, perfection, whether fancied or real, is apt to awaken presumption and self-love; and no feelings can be more inimical to real piety—more dangerous to genuine Christianity, though they are ever to be found in the breast of an enthusiast." "Rosalind has many faults," said she one day, when her flippancy had exposed her to the severe reprimand of an elderly lady, who insisted upon her recanting some idle tale detracting from the honour of a beloved relative; "but they are the errors of a warm heart, volatile spirit, and an open ingenuous character which time will correct. They may occasionally lead her into dilemmas, but they are infinitely preferable to the cold suspicions, the heartless prudence, the affected sanctity of premature age. Nothing is charming that is unnatural; it may surprise, but cannot long please."

If these oblique hints seemed, from Felicia's usual composure of manner, to be lost upon her, a sly sidelong glance, thrown as if inadvertently, pointed the innuendo to her. If, on the contrary, Felicia, in defiance of her endeavours, appeared hurt, she would compliment the sweetness of Rosalind's temper, which she declared (though she might be a little hasty sometimes) would enable her to brave the world.

As petty villany often inflames to anger a mind that can preserve its equanimity under injustice of real magnitude, so those injuries which, to any but the injured, are seemingly too trifling to resent, often inflict the deepest wounds—rankle longest in the heart; and it required all Felicia's native forbearance and self-command to avoid a reply to these provoking cowardly attacks, when stealing a look at Evanmore, she saw his cheek dyed, less with indignation at her aunt's unkindness, than mortification at her supposed folly.

CHAP. XVI.

" Or love me less, or love me more,
And play not with my liberty;
Either take all, or all restore;
Blind me at least, or set me free.
Let me some nobler torture find
Than of a doubtful wavering mind."

MR. OSBORNE'S situation of course rendered him a frequent visitor in Portman Square; and though his fair mistress received his attentions with a degree of *nonchalance* that might have been a little disheartening to some lovers, he was apparently perfectly satisfied. He had taken an elegant residence in one of the principal streets, and Rosalind sometimes condescended to inspect the improvements he was making in her future abode.

Lady Wyedale saw all these preparations with increased displeasure, as ominous of Rosalind's determination to enter the pale of matrimony; and to this cause might be ascribed a part of her ill-humour to Felicia. It was not, however, entirely the origin of that capricious malevolence which gave Felicia so much pain; and excited in Evanmore's bosom so many apprehensions that she would, as she advanced in life, become a sour bigot, ready to deprive herself and him of every innocent enjoyment of life. Lady Wyedale was really indisposed, and contemplated with something like uneasiness the arrival of that period which should consign her to the exclusive care of servants. She did not love Felicia; and had Rosalind either remained with her, or formed such an alliance as she had for so many years proudly anticipated, she would have seen her the wife of Evanmore without a sentiment of regret. But she now wished for the continuance of her almost filial attentions; and lamented that her union with a man of Evanmore's slender fortune would condemn her to more obscurity than even her sister. Had Felicia been unengaged, she would without hesitation have transferred to her that fortune so long destined to Rosalind; and, in the hope of her making some advantageous connection, buried her mortification at Rosalind's failure. But this gratification of her feelings, resentments, and

vanity, she saw it vain to expect. Felicia's attachment to Evanmore was evidently of too strong a nature to be shaken by anything that she could offer; and additionally disgusted with principles that were not only so much at variance with her own, but inimical to her views, she found a malignant pleasure in making her the unceasing object of her persecution. Had her ladyship imagined that these undeserved attacks on her defenceless niece were gradually paving the way to a total estrangement between her and Mr. Evanmore, she would probably have pursued them with an ardour that might have defeated their success; but unsuspecting, from the calm serenity with which Felicia bore them, that they really gave her extreme pain; or that she contemplated the effect they seemed to produce on her lover with much more; she continued to exercise her ingenuity with so little design that its impression became hourly more felt by both.

Felicia's temper and understanding naturally led her to extract the best and happiest ingredients from the mingled cup of human life, and on every important occasion her conduct was guided by her principles; but she possessed all the passions of human nature, and though she could forgive—sincerely forgive,—she was not insensible to unkindness or neglect. She felt she was ill-used; and her bosom alternately swelled with grief or resentment, as she saw that Evanmore, in defiance of his continued protestations of attachment, did not secretly dislike Lady Wyedale's severity to her on such subjects.

"Is it possible," she thought, when one day her feelings had been unusually wounded by the behaviour of both, "that Evanmore's sentiments have undergone a change! Oh, no! it cannot be!—Those principles which were implanted by the hand of a parent, and have hitherto influenced his conduct through life, can never be uprooted by the frivolous remarks, the contemptible sneers of such a woman as Lady Wyedale." Still she felt not quite at ease on this important point, and with the quicksightedness of love, she also began to fear she perceived a diminution in those nameless attentions which mark the exclusive attachment of a devoted heart. He often pressed her to consent to be his before the stipulated twelve months expired—was ever ready to accompany her in her walks—read to her—talked to her of their future arrangements and pursuits when she should be mistress of Alverston; but she fancied he did not now, as formerly, hang on her words—solicit her opinion—or rest satisfied with it when given, unless it had had the sanction of Rosalind or her aunt.

When the mind is already in a state of irritation, trivial events sometimes accelerate a crisis that might otherwise never have been produced.

Lady Wyedale, who seldom knew what it was to feel complacent except when detailing her catalogue of complaints, with their attendant symptoms, and medical treatment,—after a long recapitulation of her sufferings to an acquaintance one day, observed,

that she should feel less reluctant to leave London in the ensuing summer than she had ever previously done, because she should be able to have the advice of a Dr. Dursley, a physician of some eminence, lately settled in the vicinity of the Lodge. "And though I have reason to apprehend, from all that I have heard, he is well calculated for forming a connection with his sanctified neighbours, the Berkelys, yet I shall not suffer my dislike to his private character to deprive me of the benefit I may derive from his abilities."

"There you are quite right," said her obliging acquaintance. "Besides, it would perhaps be wrong to visit too severely a folly into which he has been led by his family. I am, however, entirely of your opinion, my dear Lady Wyedale; and I can, with truth, say, I have never found religion prevent any one from doing what they like—living as they please—saying what they think. To set up for a saint you have only to leave off public amusements—go to church whenever the doors are open—patronise Bible Societies, and fill the heads of the poor so full of learning that they will never be fit for work, or for discharging the duties of their station. You may then eat, drink, dress, revile your neighbours; and, in short, indulge every bad passion of the heart without scruple or remorse."

This just and liberal delineation of a religious character produced a burst of applause from Lady Wyedale, a laugh from Rosalind, a smile from Evanmore; and, satisfied that she had accurately depicted the pursuits and enjoyments of the pious, their acquaintance proceeded in high spirits to communicate a fact before unknown to them; namely, that Dr. Dursley, it was supposed, would really strengthen his interest in the country by an alliance with Miss Berkely.

Aware how much Lady Wyedale disliked her friends, the Berkelys, Felicia now never alluded to them, though in close correspondence with Miss Berkely; and, surprised at receiving this unexpected intelligence, she paid to the conversation a degree of attention of which she had not previously thought it deserving.

"Oh! if that is the case, he must be far gone indeed, for Miss Berkely is quite a fanatic," rejoined Lady Wyedale, with a sly look at Felicia,—too happy to have the opportunity of wounding her, through her friends, to neglect it.

"A fanatic!" exclaimed Evanmore—"dreadful! Dr. Dursley must have very different feelings from mine. Nothing would be so terrible to me as to have an enthusiastic, visionary woman for my wife. In the present state of society it is impossible to live the life of an ascetic. I think, indeed, however attached, I could never so far permit my prudence to sleep, as to unite myself to one who was always aiming at impracticable excellence, never satisfied with those around her, because they fall short of that degree of perfection which it is impossible mere mortals can ever attain."

“ ‘When caps among a crowd are thrown,
Each guilty head will claim its own.’ ”

is a received maxim. Sometimes, however, a cap may be thrown with so good an aim that it must necessarily fall on the destined head; it may not nevertheless fit.”

Felicia felt these remarks did not apply to her. She was no surly fanatic—no fanatic enthusiast; she aspired only to that perfection which many had already reached, and could not see either fanaticism or enthusiasm in silently endeavouring to live in conformity with the precepts of Christianity. Yet she listened to them with an alarm which she vainly tried to conceal even from herself, as the chilling omens of future misfortune. She had instinctively looked at him, when their visitor, after summing up the necessary qualifications of a religious character, finished the portrait by a laugh, that was instantly echoed by Lady Wyedale, and though he merely smiled, it was one of mingled import, and rather resembled the unnatural sunshine that often precedes a tempest, than that which promises a smiling day. Her eye met his—its expression conveyed no warmth to her heart; and, scarcely knowing what she did, she turned to a table and took up a volume he had been reading. It was a work of Marmontel. Anxious to hide her uneasiness and embarrassment, she opened it, and glancing over the page, her attention was arrested by the following passage:—

“Whether those who cease to please, or those who cease to be pleased, are most to blame, it may sometimes be difficult to determine. So difficult that, when this becomes a question between two friends, they perhaps had better part than venture upon the discussion.”

Felicia involuntarily threw down the book, as if suddenly stung, and rushed out of the room. “Part!” she exclaimed, large tears flowing over her face, as she flung herself on a chair in her own apartment. “Part—with Evanmore! he whom I have loved since childhood—he whose image is intertwined around every avenue of my heart! Oh no, no, it cannot be! Yet are not our views now at variance? Has he not learnt to esteem me a bigot? And oh, may not his own principles have undergone a change which must separate us for ever!”—she shuddered and wept, bitterly wept. Again she perused the passage, which seemed so suddenly to have drawn from her eyes the bandage she had so long struggled to bind over them. Her tastes were not inflexible; but her principles she knew were; and while she felt that she should have a pride and a pleasure in sacrificing all minor opinions to his, she was aware that on those essential points where only they seemed materially to disagree, she should be immovable. So at least she now believed, but might she not be too secure in her own fancied strength? Ought she to unite her fate to one whose faith was unsound? Had she not herself reason to dread, that the frailty of her nature,

unsupported by his guiding hand, might hereafter be exposed to trials which her attachment to him might render her unable to surmount. "And even if this were not the case!" she cried, as these reflections presented themselves to her imagination. "Oh, how could I support the idea that he who constituted my whole of happiness here, would never join with me in a holier, purer union hereafter — that our separation, when death should consign us to the earth from whence we sprung, should be eternal? And how widespread would be my misery, and the misery of those most dear to me! How could I hope to impress on the minds of my children the hopes, the fears, the joys of a Christian, when with dawning intelligence they would see their father was a stranger to them? Oh, what is the anguish I now feel, to the bitter pangs that would thrill through my breaking heart on witnessing the declining piety, the wavering virtue, the growing indifference of a husband to whom my endeavours after goodness must appear the madness of a zealot, or the folly of an enthusiast? Yes, we must part!" she continued, folding her hands with anguish as she spoke. "My aunt conjured me in her last moments never to let any earthly love engross the best affections of my soul; and shall I be obeying her commands if I voluntarily unite myself to a man who feels not as I feel — whose dear, but dangerous example may at length lead me from the path of virtue?"

Yet to tear herself from a man whose attachment endeared her existence, and whose image had been associated with her every vision of happiness, required a degree of fortitude which she found herself unequal to exercise; and after many struggles to acquire composure for the task, she resolved to communicate her griefs, scruples, and fears to the bosom of a lady with whom she had not been for some years very intimate, but on whose friendship, prudence, and judgment she knew she might implicitly depend.

Mrs. Marshington, the lady to whom she determined to confide her uneasiness, and by whose opinion she resolved to be guided, had been, four years before, her friend and companion. Her marriage with a gentleman who resided in a distant county, then dissolved an intimacy from which each had derived sincere gratification; and though they had not since met, and Mrs. Marshington's situation as a wife and mother forbad that frequent intercourse which had so many years subsisted between them, they had never ceased to correspond. Mrs. Marshington was six or seven years older than Felicia; but this circumstance had proved no impediment to the friendship Mrs. Beauclerc wished to encourage between them, for Mrs. Marshington found no other acquaintance whose tastes and pursuits were so similar to her own; and Felicia, deprived of the society of Rosalind, fondly clung to her as a sort of elder sister, in whose company she should find some consolation for the loss of her whose image

constantly dwelt in her bosom. Congenial ideas and mutual esteem augmented, as they advanced towards womanhood, their juvenile regard; and, next to the loss of Rosalind, Felicia regretted that of Mrs. Marshington, when she at length left Leominster to reside with her husband's relations in Leicestershire. With her engagement to Mr. Evanmore she was of course acquainted, and having known something of him before her marriage, Felicia flattered herself she was peculiarly competent to decide upon this important subject. With a breaking heart she therefore sat down, and after stating her situation, views, and apprehensions as dispassionately as she could, despatched her letter to the post-office, and endeavoured to await a reply with tolerable composure. She was, however, at one of those momentous periods of our being which precludes the possibility of being calm. Her fate hung on Mrs. Marshington's answer, and vainly she tried to regard with tranquillity the arrival of a letter which would decide whether she should be for ever miserable or for ever happy. If Mrs. Marshington should, after well weighing the contents of her letter, and investigating the nature of her complaints against Evanmore, think she had no reason to apprehend his principles to be impaired by his residence in London, she felt she could receive him again to her bosom with renewed attachment; and, in the consciousness that she had injured him, bury the remembrance of those little instances of seeming want of affection which she had resented. After four days of extreme perturbation, and unceasing anxiety, a letter from Mrs. Marshington was put into her hands; and, trembling from the intensity of feelings wound up to the highest possible pitch of anxiety, she read the following lines:—

“So long a time had elapsed since I last wrote to you, my dear Felicia, that I was beginning to apprehend you had forgotten me in the gaiety and happiness of your present situation, when your letter arrived, not only to remove so unpleasing a suspicion, but demonstrate to me, yet more fully, the fallacy of my judgment, and the uncertainty of all human enjoyments. As I am aware you cannot feel the least interest on any other subject at such a period, I will hasten to the contents of your letter; and, as you have so fairly stated your feelings and wishes, give you my opinion with the candour you have a right to expect from a friend, in return for your desire to be advised.

“After carefully considering the cause of your anxiety, and reflecting on the temptations to which Mr. Evanmore has been exposed, I own I am inclined to think he is not yet undeserving of your attachment, or that you will run any real risk in uniting your fate to his.”

A cry of joy burst from Felicia; and, pressing the letter to her lips, she imprinted on it the glad kiss of heartfelt delight. “Oh, we have not parted!” she cried—“never, never shall!—dearest Evanmore—how have I injured thee—how have I de-

ceived myself!" Overpowered by these delightful emotions, some minutes elapsed before she could resume the perusal of her letter, which ran thus:—

"From the little that I knew of Mr. Evanmore, and from all I have heard of him, I am disposed to believe he is a very amiable young man; and, as his addresses received the sanction of your aunt, I think you should not hastily or rashly refuse to fulfil your engagement with him. Let me, however, not be misunderstood. I hold this opinion *only from* the persuasion I entertain, that he is *worthy* of your regard; and, before you fulfil it, I earnestly entreat you to satisfy yourself both by private observation and open expostulation, that your present doubts are unfounded—that his principles are such as, I feel assured, Mrs. Beaucherc believed they were when she gave her consent to his union with you. I am certainly not inclined to think his merely liking public amusements, or his dreading you might become a fanatic, any proof of his want of religion. The former are scenes of great allurements, and few *young men*, however serious, can be made to see anything in them of an injurious tendency; and you must remember that, exposed as he has been to the contagion of Lady Wyedale's sentiments—listening as he has done to her censures of your (as she deems it) overstrained piety—he would have been almost more than you could reasonably expect, had he escaped being in the slightest degree influenced by them. When a physician is called in to decide on a difficult question, it is equally his duty and his interest, not only to give the case his most minute attention, but state his opinion, however unpleasant, both to the invalid and himself, so clearly, that his patient may never afterwards have reason to complain of his skill or his sincerity. Esteeming myself placed in that situation, I have bestowed much consideration on the subject of your uneasiness; and I trust you will forgive my, perhaps, unpalatable explicitness, when I say, that on re-perusing your letter, I fear I should ill discharge my obligations to you did I omit to mention, that I am a little apprehensive you have felt more mortification at Mr. Evanmore's being so frequently the companion of the captivating Rosalind than you are probably yourself aware of.

"One of the most difficult, yet most important species of learning we can ever attain is, such an acquaintance with the recesses of our own hearts as to enable us to see plainly the *motives* of our conduct. Even the best and wisest of men, without this information, may be so deluded by the glittering halo in which self-love encircles us, as to imagine they are acting under the *influence* of truth and reason, when they are in reality *influenced* by far less honourable guides. I request, therefore, you will seriously examine your own heart, and endeavour to ascertain whether your present unwillingness to continue your engagement with Mr. Evanmore springs not rather from secret pique or wounded pride than any real, well-founded apprehension of his declining piety;

for it is, unhappily, too common an error among serious people, especially young persons of our own sex, from the want of this self-knowledge, to fancy, when they act from the dictates of disappointed affection or misplaced zeal, that they are governed by motives of religion. Be therefore firm to your own principles ; but keep a clear eye in discerning between a sense of duty and a feeling of inclination. I have thought it right, both for your sake and Mr. Evanmore's, to offer these apologies for the seeming inconsistency of his conduct, and suggest these hints for the regulation of yours. Again, however, I implore, that you will not misconceive my meaning. If, after scrutinising his heart and your own, you have, on further intimacy, reason to fear that the sentiments of Lady Wyedale and her friends have sunk deeply into his mind, and are likely to give a tinge to his future character, or that his present pursuits have become fixed habits which will incapacitate him from fulfilling his duties as a country gentleman, a husband, and a father, let not your attachment prevent you from instantly relinquishing your claims to his hand. It may cause you much pain ; but stand erect in your own virtue, and it will be a panoply to guard you from every real misery.

"The tear that flows from disappointed friendship, the thrill that shoots through the heart on seeing itself capriciously deserted, is bitter indeed ; but the anguish of one self-reproach is ten thousand times more poignant, more afflictive. Under this trial, you will, I am assured, do justice to the education bestowed upon you by your inestimable aunt. You have been intrusted with a rational and immortal soul, and you must not abuse or trifle with the sacred deposit committed to your charge, by unnecessarily subjecting your faith to the sneers or arguments of a beloved husband. Act up to the dignity of your nature, though the sacrifice of all you hold most dear be the result. Remember this mortal scene is one of transient duration ; it will soon close alike on the cares and pleasures of life ; and when the hour of dissolution shall at length arrive, every past anxiety, every former attachment, will merge in the one awful consideration of death. Joys and griefs will then only be remembered as having afforded opportunities of virtue. Guilt will be esteemed the only real misery : the hope of inheriting eternity the only blissful sentiment that can irradiate the darkness of the expiring soul.

"Entreating you never to lose sight of these awful truths, I now bid you adieu, and with the sincerest regard and esteem, believe me,

"Your affectionate and sympathising friend,

"ANNE MARSHINGTON."

CHAP. XVII.

"There is a pleasure in poetic pains,
Which only poets know."
— Lost in his own musings, happy man !
He feels th' anxieties of life, denied
Their wonted entertainment, all retire.
Such joys has he that sings. But ah ! not such,
Or seldom such, the hearers of his song." COWPER.

THOUGH the conclusion of Mrs. Marshington's letter, and its general tenor, a little damped the exuberant joy Felicia had felt on first glancing over its commencement, she was too much relieved by the certainty that Mrs. Marshington saw no reason for her separation from Evanmore, to be inclined to diminish her present happiness by any gloomy anticipations of the future. Evanmore was again her own — she had, Mrs. Marshington believed, judged him harshly, and she was not disposed to scrutinise too nicely a decision from which she received so much pleasure.

It has been justly observed, that when our feelings are sufficiently composed to allow us to commit our thoughts to verse, we can no longer be under very acute sensations of misery ; and Felicia was a striking instance of the truth of the remark. During the period that she was balancing between her attachment and her duty, she would have been incapable of connecting half-a-dozen ideas in tolerably appropriate language. Her person was, indeed, the inhabitant of Lady Wyedale's mansion, but her mind had flown to Leicestershire, or was solely employed in speculating on the probable contents of Mrs. Marshington's reply. Now, however, when restored to Evanmore and happiness, she had leisure and inclination to think ; and reverting to Mrs. Marshington's former kindness, the endeavours she had made to imprint on her youthful mind those lessons she had received from Mrs. Beauclerc, and her present desire to promote her happiness, she took out a pencil, and wrote the following lines on the cover of Mrs. Marshington's letter :—

"Oh, believe not, my love, that I e'er can forget
A friend so faithful and true ;
Oh, no ! till the sun of my life shall be set,
I must ever think fondly of you.

"No : the flowers of gratitude never can fade
In a bosom so ardent as mine,
Or apathy listlessly fling in the shade
The remembrance of kindness like thine.

"Dear guide of my youth, instructed by thee,
Each rude passion shall sink into rest,
As the storm that raves wild o'er the billowy sea,
Is hushed at its Maker's behest."

She had just finished the last stanza when Rosalind flew into the room. Her eye was lighted up with the wicked glee of a lively school-boy on achieving some little act of juvenile roguery.

"Ah! what are you also in the agonies of composition, Philly? Why, I have only just got out of them myself!" She caught the letter out of her sister's hand as she spoke, and eagerly read the lines. "To be sure, there is a wide difference in the nature of our lucubrations. Thy muse and mine are as diametrically opposite as thou and myself—more I cannot say! And now for the key to what has made me for the first time a poet. You know there has long been a suspicion afloat that Mr. Flickerton (the poor white-eyed, red-haired, wild-looking man, you may remember, I pointed out at Brighton) was an admirer of the *foolosopher* who bored you so dreadfully about spring-tides and neap-tides, the influence of the moon on comets, brains, &c. &c. at one of Lady Wyedale's parties. Well, this was a subject on which I always felt very sceptical, yet very curious, and last night at the theatre, as my good genius would have it, my doubts and desires were gratified. We all sat in the same box; and about the conclusion of the first act, Flickerton had occasion to use his handkerchief. As he drew it out, a piece of crumpled writing-paper took the liberty of emerging from the obscurity of his pocket at the same time; and as it fell close to me, I saw a great Miss B—— elevated above half-a-dozen other words. The rogue dropt at my feet, and I instantly secured the prize by placing one of my pretty *pieds* upon it. Perhaps it was not strictly honourable; but the temptation was too much for my virtue, and I resolutely maintained possession of what I had thus secured, through the evening. I am not sure he was without some remote suspicion that he had sustained a loss; for I saw him pry with his hand into every corner of his pocket once or twice, and cast an investigating suspicious eye around him as often. But though I shook in my shoes, as the saying is, I kept the culprit, whose indiscreet desire to see the world had thus subjected him to my thralldom, safe in durance vile. Sitting or standing, still I contrived to hide the little villain from view. My legs ached terribly; but every rose has its thorn, and when (after having with an affected humility that astonished and delighted both, declined to go out of the box first) I seized the momentary opportunity afforded by their absence of dropping my handkerchief on the ground, and securing the prostrate captive, I felt amply repaid for what I had endured. I scudded with it to my room as soon as I reached home, and read these lines, though written with so many interpolations, alterations, addendas, and interlineations, that I could hardly come at the sense, till I had fairly copied them out. I then finished the proposal, and took the trouble of transfusing the whole into verse. It cost me a world of pains; but the fruits of patience, as I have often heard you sagely remark, though long in coming, are deliciously sweet when they *do come*; and I can attest the truth of the observation, I believe, for the first time,—now listen—

“ ‘ Madam,

“ ‘ I have at length summoned resolution to say that your many mental and personal attractions have inspired me with a passion I would vainly try to describe. Should you approve of my attachment, my situation will, I hope, be no impediment to our happiness ; as, though fortune has not hitherto been altogether propitious to my wishes, I have no doubt——’

* * * * *

“ ‘ Resolution, at length, has been taken by me
To say I adore you, my dearest Miss B——.
Indeed my Minerva I love to excess,
And the pangs of a lover what words can express ?
Say, can you, all-blessed by the smile of renown,
From the heights of Parnassus to me venture down ;
To tread in the vale of domestic delight,
Forget to illumine this dark world with light ?
Oh, can you, who know all that schoolmen can teach,
Philosophers urge, or moralists preach,—
Oh, can you, in pity to love and to me,
Change the laurel-wreath green for the sweet myrtle tree ?
If you can, take this letter and lock of red hair,
As a proof of the love which to you I now bear ;
Oh, may they repose on that bosom of snow,
And induce you, my charmer, to pity my woe !
Oh, may Mr. Beaumont, to mercy inclined,
Permit your poor William to open his mind,
And tell of estates he will settle on thee,
Either placed in the moon, or to spring from the sea.
Oh yes, my dear girl, I can proffer at least
Half the riches of Cæsar and gems of the East :
At present, ’tis true, I am not worth much,
And instinctively shrink from a balliff’s rude touch ;
But I doubt not, my love, in a year or two more
My pockets with silver and gold will run o’er ;
For domains I possess in the bright shining moon
Will yield me their produce, I trust, very soon.
And more than all this, you know very well,
Your learning alone my pockets will swell.
On your knowledge of languages, flowerets, and shells ;
On your wit—on your wisdom—my head often dwells :
Of those charms that so justly exalt you o’er all
The poor silly Misses who dance at a ball ;
Indeed, ’twould be strange if a dervise, like me,
By a stroke of my wand could not turn to specie.
Then list to thy William, assured thou wilt gain
Some good to thyself and give ease to his pain ;
For, solaced by thy presence, inspired by thine eye,
Exertion must spring, and misfortune must die ;
While ’tis sweet through the mazes of knowledge to stray,
Thy smile my reward, and thy praises my bay.
Though the vulgar may stare, and the scornful may smile,
We’ll often our evenings with learning beguile.
The loves of the plants thou shalt tell of to me,
And the mysteries of science I’ll open to thee.
Then Lucretia, my angel ! consider the case,
And deign to unbend that sage-looking face ;
For to-morrow to Chelsea I surely will go
Through the wet and the cold, the dirt and the snow ;
And if on those lips one smile I may see,
Most gladly shall bend both my right and left knee.
I must now, sweet Minerva, bid you adieu,
And trust me, dread goddess, I speak very true,
When I say, that I’ll love you for ever and ever,
Or while death our two hearts most unkindly shall sever.

And till that sad period, in old fashioned phrase,
Believe me your most fervent lover always.

"WILLIAM FLICKERTON."

"What, not one word?" she cried, half-playfully, half-angrily striking Felicia with the paper, after having waited at the conclusion of her lines some moments in expectation of Felicia's speaking.

"Yes—after thus gratifying your humour and your curiosity, I hope you will commit both the paper you so surreptitiously obtained, and the lines they have occasioned, to the flames."

"Commit the first production of my muse to the flames! Why, the woman is become jealous, I declare!"

"No, indeed," said Felicia, laughing, "I am not at all envious of your poetical powers, I assure you."

"Oh, you vain wretch! So you think them mere doggerel, do you? To be sure I did not imagine they would entitle me to dispute the palm with either Scott or Byron; yet never did I peruse a line of either with half so much pleasure; and, if they would only be sincere, I question whether Miss Beaumont's and Mr. Flickerton's friends might not be able to make the same assertion, with equal truth, when they meet their eyes."

"Surely you will not be so imprudent, nor yet so——"

"I will finish the sentence for you—malevolent as to show them. Well, don't be alarmed, I will only exhibit them to a few select friends."

"Not to one, if you value your happiness, or theirs," cried Felicia, earnestly. "Never could they forgive such a mortifying attack on all they value most dearly. Oh, you know not the misery their exposure might be productive of both to you and them. Injuries are sometimes forgiven, but insult and satire never—never."

"Oh, *misericorde!* And must my first-born be consigned to oblivion?" she passed the back of her hand across her eyes, as if to wipe away her tears. "Come, come, don't look so disconsolate," she suddenly cried, "and I'll promise you not to show them to any one but your good man and mine. To Evanmore you can make no objection."

"I do not to Evanmore."

"And Osborne! you know we twain shall soon become one."

"Till you are so, defer the gratification you will receive from his approbation."

"Pho, pho! you are so full of fears and scruples, and——"

The entrance of Evanmore interrupted this dialogue, and Felicia, anxious to atone for her late injustice, received his morning salutation with more than even accustomed affection.

When a generous bosom has indulged in suspicions which events afterwards prove unfounded, a consciousness of past errors renders it peculiarly liable to future mistakes. Felicia felt as if she had injured him by communicating her ill-grounded doubts

to Mrs. Marshington, and blushed with shame at the idea of having been led by her affection to be jealous of his brotherly attentions to her sister. She was even almost unwilling, under the influence of these compunctious visitings of conscience, at the exposure of the motives of her own conduct, to commence that strict scrutiny Mrs. Marshington had recommended into his; and when, at length, reason whispered that Evanmore, if innocent, would come out of the ordeal with fresh glory, she resolved it should be conducted with so much delicacy and charity, that his feelings could not be wounded by the most remote suspicion of her design.

Guided by these sentiments and resolutions, she listened to Evanmore's gay compliments to Rosalind without a ray of uneasiness, and beheld him her constant attendant to every scene of fashionable amusement without alarm.

But even the blind can sometimes distinguish colours—and the deaf adder, which at first refused to listen, may in time be roused to attention. Felicia, though long manfully determined neither to see nor hear anything that tended to bring Evanmore down from the pedestal on which she had again placed him, was at length compelled to give unwilling entrance to her former apprehensions. Evanmore had now no efficient plea for continually escorting Rosalind into public. She had a lover always ready to attend her, yet he invariably joined their party; and the gratification he appeared to receive in seeing her admired, seemed rather beyond what a mere intended brother-in-law might be supposed to feel.

"Do fashionable people allow themselves no cessation from this harassing round of pleasures, as they are called?" said she one day, on seeing Rosalind selecting some flowers for the evening, while Evanmore watched her as she tried their respective merits on her redundant ringlets with unequivocal interest.

"Cessation from this harassing round of pleasures, as they are called! Dearest Felicia, what an antediluvian question!" said Evanmore, half blushing at the laugh that burst from Rosalind's lips.

"Why, had you lived at Leominster one twelve months longer," cried Rosalind, the fire of her full dark eyes shining through the tear of derision that trembled beneath the long rich silken fringes which shaded them, "you would have arrived at such a pitch of perfection, as to have been totally unfit for this terrene world. I verily believe you would have cut off your hair, and resolved to live upon roots and wild honey. I don't even think you would have allowed yourself locusts, had they been come-at-able, for fear of committing a sin by taking life. Evanmore," she continued, turning towards him, and sportively tapping his shoulder with a bunch of the flowers, "this wife of yours will be worth five times as much as she would have been, had she always

lived in seclusion, by the time I have laughed her out of a few of her antiquated notions."

"I trust," said Felicia, "I shall always have strength of mind to preserve me from being laughed out of opinions formed in hours of retirement, from a conviction of their truth."

She spoke with sweetness, but Evanmore seemed hurt. "We should be careful not to mistake attachment to peculiar notions, and adherence to the prejudices of childhood, for consistency and virtue," said he gravely.

Tears rushed into Felicia's eyes; they were the first of a painful nature Evanmore had ever excited, and her first impulse was to leave the room. "No, let me not be hasty," she thought; "he might not mean to wound my feelings. I have already wronged him by unjust surmises; and a betrayal of my petulance may injure the cause I would wish to serve. Could I more effectually advocate Lady Wyedale's sentiments, than by meeting any little attack on my principles with ill-humour or impatience?" The result of these mental interrogations was, her remaining with as composed a brow as she could assume; but in spite of her endeavours to forget or disregard Evanmore's remark, it awoke many unpleasant reflections, and revived many dormant alarms.

"I must not forget to tell you she was, as usual, the star of the evening," said he one morning just as Rosalind left the room, whilst Felicia sat at her work-table near the window, where she had been listening for some time to one of those sprightly dialogues between them which so often called forth the innate power of pleasing so remarkable in each.

"She is indeed very beautiful," said Felicia, with a half-suppressed sigh.

"Oh, that is a tame epithet to apply to her," he replied, in a tone that sounded reprehensive to Felicia's startled ear; "her pre-eminent beauty is her least attraction. She not only possesses that pleasing indefinable something, for which our neighbours in their copious vocabulary of compliment can find no other explanation than *je ne sais quoi*, but a *fleur d'esprit* which gives a charm to her most common-place observations."

Felicia was slightly indisposed, although she had not complained; her spirits were depressed — the self-command she usually possessed suddenly abandoned her, and a flood of tears that she vainly strove to hide with her upraised hands flowed, like a torrent released from its boundaries, over her pale face.

Evanmore, shocked, and alarmed, and surprised, sprung towards her; and then, believing she must be seized with illness, pulled the bell furiously. "Felicia! dearest Felicia! what has happened? What is the matter with you?" he inquired, hanging over her with extreme solicitude. "Surely! surely! what I have just said could not occasion this emotion? You know me too well, dearest! What is the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! nothing!" she sobbed, "only leave me; I am better, indeed I am."

Rosalind and Jenny, summoned by the footman who answered the bell, breathless with haste and alarm, interrupted further conversation between them.

"My dearest sister," said Rosalind, every feature indicating the truest concern, "why is this?"

"Why indeed, miss!" said Jenny, her eyes lighted up, and her cheeks glowing.

"*Sal volatile! sal volatile! hartshorn!*" cried Evanmore, who had now and then witnessed something of the kind whilst living with his mother, looking wildly towards Jenny.

"Fudge!" was the response.

Felicia partly rose from her chair. "I am quite recovered," she said gravely, motioning with her hand for Jenny to quit them, "and need nothing but quiet. So, dear Evanmore, take a stroll with Rosalind, till my aunt returns from her airing."

Evanmore recollected an engagement: he "was sorry he could not accompany Miss Rosalind in her walk," bowing gracefully to her as he spoke; then stooping down he imprinted a timid kiss on Felicia's cold brow, and hastily left them.

Felicia passed the residue of the day in her own apartment. She was not unwilling to foster the impression that illness had occasioned her morning's emotion, and very sorely did she blame herself for its origin and display. "How worse than silly—how mean—how ungenerous—how unjust, to be offended or hurt at Evanmore's admiration of Rosalind!" she thought, as she sat by the fire when her evening devotions were finished; "after, too, Mrs. Marshington's caution. How anxious and alarmed dear Evanmore was! and poor Rosalind, how I frightened her!"

"May I come in?" asked a silvery voice; and Rosalind appeared in her night dress.

"I thought you were going out," said Felicia, "and I waited up to see you dressed, and receive your parting kiss."

"I did intend to do so, but it was a humdrum party after all, to tell the truth, so I determined to stop at home, and have a little chat with you. I should have been here before, but my aunt was superlatively wearisome and *exigeante*, wondering what could be the matter with you this morning—finding it so odd—so disagreeable for young people to have such attacks. Have you never remarked that your great grumblers—your Mr. and Mrs. Never-well—permit no other complainers to trench on their domestic preserves? And now, Philly, that you are so much recovered," she pursued, flinging her arm over Felicia's neck, "and we quite alone, do, do, dearest, satisfy my raging curiosity, and tell me, your own little Rosa of olden days, when we kept nothing from each other, what did cause the catastrophe of this morning? I cannot be mistaken that there was a cause quite the reverse of the one assigned, and I must know it; in fact, I have a right;

for, by looks 'distinct and clear as any Muse's tongue could tell,' your Yorkshire Argus intimated that I had somehow part and parcel in it, although I came upon you and Evanmore precisely at the same moment, and equally summoned by his furious onslaught on the bell. What a scene it was!" and, as her lively fancy conjured up what had passed, she burst into one of those hilarious peals that speak at once for the sincerity of the merry laugh. "There you were, dearest, looking like a sweet swan suddenly wounded by some cruel hand, just ready to warble your death song, without allusion to your slayer: Evanmore hanging over you with the dubious air of one who did not quite know whether he was the assassin or not—now turning his anxious face from you to me, and again from me to you, as I pressed your dear head to my bosom; whilst Jenny (her tall, gaunt, spare figure right in front of the trio) seemed standing sentinel, as if to guard you from danger, her round grey orbs fixed on Evanmore and myself at the same moment. Yes, paradoxical as it is, equally so on both. That there is something very remarkable in her eyes I have often before observed, dilating and contracting, and changing colour like those of a cat; but to-day revealed their power of setting at defiance all the laws of optics: although I was on one side of you, and Evanmore on the other, she absolutely fixed us both! Aye, and frightened us both too! But it was not her vision only that rendered her alarming; for, when he shouted, *sal volatile! sal volatile!* at the top of his voice, as if he had been hallooing on his hounds, she merely muttered, without stirring an inch from the spot, the single cabalistic monosyllable, *fudge*—its effect was marvellous. No hapless missionary who, in return for a tract, found himself spitted through and through by the spear of some ruthless savage, could have writhed more under the infliction. He was absolutely aghast. You, likewise, acknowledged its secret meaning by suddenly rousing yourself to bid her quit the room—a command which she obeyed so unwillingly (as if afraid to leave you in our clutches) that she must have witnessed the model kiss he bestowed on your fair brow as she retreated. Philly, did his lips actually touch your pearly skin or no? I was not quite certain. None of the early Christians in the first days of their primitive purity ever bestowed on each other one more strictly orthodox. You make no answer!"

"How could I? you have not paused a second till now?" said Felicia. "Which question am I to answer first? You have asked two."

"As I am clearly the only one of the *dramatis personæ* in ignorance of the mystery veiled under the word which so horrified Evanmore, tell me at once, what did she intend to convey by it?"

"Dear Rosalind, be reasonable. How can I supply a legitimate reason for those impertinences old favourite servants will occasionally allow themselves? You know her odd manner, and

Evanmore's sensitive temperament—his almost morbid dread of insult or rudeness. I dare say she did not think the *sal volatile* would do me good; and, seeing the effect of her improper conduct on him, I naturally bade her leave the room."

Rosalind was silent for a few seconds, as if in thought, then resumed in a calm yet inquiring tone—

"Felicia, you can tell me the true cause of your illness. Do!"

"Weakness, mental and corporeal," she replied, struggling to conquer her agitation.

"Words mysterious and meaningless as response from the Cumæan Sibyl. A straightforward answer would have been more characteristic of thy usual mode of speech, friend Felicia," said she, rising from the easy chair on which she had been negligently thrown, taking up her little silver lamp from the table; "but it is an answer; and as I infer from it I shall get no other, fare thee well, and may the model kiss I witnessed prove the kiss of peace!"

"Darling Rosa," cried Felicia, touched by her tender accent, "darling Rosa of olden days, stop! and let me repeat to-night some of those kisses that in former happy years we loved to give each other." She rose, and flung her arms around her; and Rosalind, replacing the lamp, returned her fond caress. Many, many times they kissed each other. Felicia felt she had wronged her, and drew her again and again to her bosom in atonement. In this interchange of affection, Felicia accidentally loosened the comb that but slightly held up Rosalind's redundant tresses under the small lace cap, and they fell suddenly over her white night-dress like a cloud of wavy gold.

"What a pretty, pretty creature you are!" said Felicia, gazing with affectionate admiration upon her; "I do not wonder that all are in love with you. How this brings to mind the old days! I dare say you remember, Rosa, when we were children together, I used to weep with affright if anything ailed you, because I was sure the angels were now coming to take my pretty sister back again to heaven."

"Perfectly," said Rosalind, her full lustrous eyes glittering through the diamond drops called forth by this refined compliment—sincere she knew as refined. Again they embraced, and parted with a deeper feeling of attachment and confidence than had hitherto existed between them since their reunion under Lady Wyedale's roof.

The ensuing morning brought an early visit from Evanmore, and at his earnest request Felicia accompanied him in a long drive in his own phaeton; but, unlike Rosalind, he studiously avoided any reference to her yesterday's indisposition, beyond the expression of his hope that it had entirely passed away. He was more than usually attentive to her—talked of Alverston, and some meditated improvements there, and a mere looker-on would have said: that he was the most devoted of gentlemanly

lovers. Felicia wished to think him so, but she was neither a saint nor a heroine; her, manner, too, was affectionate, but there was an under-current of hidden feeling at her heart that would have told a different tale had it been revealed. For as a spark will sometimes awake the smouldering embers of a dying fire into flame, that scene suddenly gave life and energy to the suspicions she had been so long trying to hush. Jenny's behaviour had not escaped her; she knew her to be gifted with a sharp, shrewd, subtle perception of character. Long had she seen with pain her struggle between sense of duty, and abiding invincible antipathy to Rosalind, and she divined the reason. She had not the slightest apprehension that it was deserved, excepting so far as her ruling passion for admiration, her love of dissipation might be implicated; but she did not thus acquit Evanmore.

"I will not be precipitate," she cried, after a long and painful retrospection of all that had given birth to these agonising fears—"but I will be vigilant." Alas! vigilance was not necessary to show her that Evanmore would never again, in all human probability, be contented with those simple pleasures which had once constituted his sum of earthly enjoyment; or that, though he still loved her, still wished to make her his wife, he had learnt to think her opinions visionary, her pursuits insipid, and her knowledge of life inferior to that evinced by his fascinating guide and counsellor, Rosalind Leycester. Felicia wept with uncontrollable anguish, as something of the truth gleamed dimly on her mind. Often she tried to enter into that explanation which Mrs. Marshington had advised; but a secret, undefined sensation of dread daily withheld her—for she loved—dearly loved; and while she wished, she feared to be convinced.

CHAP. XVIII.

"The trav'ler, if he chance to stray,
May turn uncensured to his way;
Polluted springs again are pure;
And deepest wounds admit a cure;
But woman! no redemption knows,—
The wounds of honour never close."

T. MOORE.

In the uncertain changing scenes of life, trivial events frequently become the heralds of the most important revolutions. Such was the state of Felicia's mind when Lady Wyedale, Rosalind, and herself, received tickets for a masquerade from a Lady Clarinda Lovelace. A fourth ticket was enclosed in the packet for any gentleman whom they might wish to be their protector.

Felicia was out at the time they arrived, and Rosalind accepted the invitation in the name of all. Lady Wyedale, though indisposed, determined to *chaperone* her nieces on this occasion; and

the unappropriated ticket was given to Evanmore, who accepted it with gratitude and pleasure. He had never seen a masquerade, and promised himself much gratification from witnessing the first at the house of a lady of quality, not more distinguished by birth than fashion. Rosalind also, though the amusement was no novelty to her, had secret reasons for being disposed to contemplate this with particular delight.

Lady Clarinda was a very distant branch of the Edgermond family, and though some circumstances in her ladyship's history induced the major part of her connections to treat her with considerable coldness, Rosalind knew that Lord Edgermond would not be influenced by them to refrain from attending such a scene. Again she resolved to concentrate all her attractions; and, again, hopes of success, which had no foundation but in vanity and a vague feeling of possibility, found continuance in her bosom.

She was in the midst of a most animated description of the fascinations of such fairy scenes of amusement, when Felicia returned, and on learning she was expected to make one of the party, declined to avail herself of Lady Clarinda's invitation, with a cool firmness that left no doubt of her adhering to her resolution.

Evanmore could not repress his mortification. "Dearest Felicia! really you are a little unaccommodating."

"You would not think so if you knew my reasons."

"Oh! you mean to say, that the *faux-pas* Lady Clarinda committed a few years ago is the motive of your refusal?" cried Rosalind, a little provoked at anything which reflected on Lord Edgermond's connections at such a time.

"That undoubtedly was one of them," said Felicia. "And I own, my dearest Rosalind, I wish it had more weight with you."

Rosalind was offended. "Oh! far be it from me to assume the character of a sage and a moralist, and trumpet forth, that I am too virtuous to visit a woman who is visited by all the rest of the world."

"Not all," said Felicia calmly; "for you know you have often told me, since she was divorced from her first husband, Lord Edgermond's uncle has never countenanced her."

"Oh! he is no criterion."

"No! Is he no criterion, whose life has been devoted to the service of his country — whose talents have been uniformly directed to the benefit of his fellow-creatures — and whose private character is not less distinguished for virtue, than his public one for ability? There my respect for rank is deepened to veneration — and —"

"Really these are points I have no inclination to discuss," interrupted Rosalind, coldly; and she turned the conversation with so much evident haste, that Felicia, suspecting the cause of her petulance, forbore to continue it. But during the fortnight that intervened between this dialogue and the day appointed for the

masquerade, she omitted no opportunity of gently hinting to Evanmore her wish that he should not, on this occasion, be the escort of Lady Wyedale and Rosalind.

Evanmore listened—that was all. He had been momentarily startled by learning, that Lord Wilberton, a nobleman of distinguished attainments, and high character for worth, refused to sanction the gay author of this anticipated scene of amusement; but it was soon effaced by Rosalind's assertion, that she was visited by all the *rest* of the world; and, equally unwilling to deprive himself of so much pleasure, or to incur Rosalind's raillery, he was determined not to give way to Felicia's scrupulous delicacy.

The important day at length arrived; and in the anticipation of the joys, glories, and triumphs of the evening, Rosalind spent a restless, indolent day. She could think and talk of nothing else. Felicia, whose well regulated mind never suffered itself to waste in idle speculations or illusive visions of future happiness the present hour, saw her with surprise; and as she calmly folded up her work when the first dinner-bell rung, could not avoid making the trite observation, that no life is more remote from real enjoyment, than a life spent in the pursuit of pleasures which seldom fail to elude the grasp, or, when attained, are accompanied by languor and satiety. As she made the remarks, the door opened, and Evanmore entered.

"Always welcome," cried Rosalind, "but particularly so now; for I have been all the morning trying to prevail upon Felicia to change her mind, and accompany us this evening, but ineffectually. Perhaps your arguments may be more successful. She might go in a domino without exciting attention, and she would be so much entertained, I cannot endure to see her thus deprive herself of an innocent amusement, to gratify some obsolete prejudice, or attend to some nonsensical punctilio. Really we must quiz her out of all this, Evanmore."

"I hope," said Felicia, "that resolutions formed in meditation will always be proof against thoughtless raillery. And to relieve you from any good-natured uneasiness at my being debarred by them from indulging my natural feelings, I assure you I should have no amusement in going to the masquerade."

"No amusement!" exclaimed Rosalind.

"No amusement!" echoed Evanmore.

"No, not if the descriptions I have heard and read of such scenes bear the stamp of veracity. Amused! with what?—A scene of wild and senseless confusion—nuns, friars, goddesses, and devils; satyrs, harlequins, chambermaids, and princesses, distinguished from each other only by a diversity of appearance, and a laboured flippancy of address."

"But admitting this to be a portrait of a masquerade," said Evanmore, "and it is, I surmise, a caricatured one, surely there can be no impropriety in occasionally partaking of such a diversion? We cannot always be on stilts, dear Felicia; we must now

and then descend to the amusements and pursuits of our fellow-creatures."

"If its want of attraction or dignity were my only motive for refusing compliance, I might probably be induced to acquiesce, however wearisome and disgusting would be to me the miserable attempts at wit and repartee, which form, I am told, the best part of the diversion; but, indeed, dear Evanmore, as you thus compel me to be explicit, I must positively decline to mingle with three or four hundred persons, privileged to say whatever occurs to a volatile or depraved imagination; and protected by a mask from that disgrace which must otherwise follow the exposure of their sentiments and conduct."

"Dear Felicia, what a prude!—what an inflexible prude you are!" said Rosalind, with a laugh that displayed two rows of teeth vying with oriental pearls in beauty and lustre. "I believe we must leave her," she continued, turning to Evanmore. "I verily think she would expect some such dreadful *finale* as, formerly, always attended the heroines of novels at such wicked places, and in every mask who addressed her, expect to find a bravo hired to carry her off. But don't be alarmed, my dear—men now-a-days can get wives without so much trouble: depend upon it, even Miss Byron herself, in this age, would not have suffered so terribly from her thousand and one lovers. Women are not so beleaguered at present."

"You are not decided, Felicia?" cried Evanmore, in a tone of interrogation.

"I am, certainly."

"Then I presume I must go alone?" said he, hesitatingly, while a slight colour stole over his cheek.

"If you go at all," said Felicia, pointedly.

A pause of some moments ensued: Evanmore felt the full force of this innuendo, but he could not bear to deny himself so much expected happiness; and equally unable to witness Felicia's mortification, he caught up his gloves, and wishing them a hurried good morning, left the room.

Felicia watched his retreating figure with feelings she vainly attempted to suppress. Till now, she had never been without hopes he might have yielded to her evident wishes, and been sufficiently influenced by his own principles, on reflection, to forego a transient gratification, afforded by a woman who had trampled on every duty of life, and whose present conduct evinced no sentiment of either shame or remorse for the past. Averting her head, that Rosalind might not witness her emotion, she returned to her room, and was soon lost in a train of melancholy reflections. This mournful reverie was interrupted by a hasty foot; the door burst open, and Jenny entered, with a face crimsoned by passion.

"I'm kum to say as you must provide yourself with another servant, Miss Felicia," said she, closing the door with terrific vio-

lence. "I can stan'it no longer. You must get some other body to kum in my place — I mun go — I mun go!" Tears now interrupted her speech; and sinking into a chair, she sobbed with hysterical emotion. It was in vain that Felicia, alarmed at her strange behaviour and transports of sorrow, requested to know the cause of her distress; the floodgates of her grief were opened, and she cried till, weary of fruitless importunities, Felicia patiently waited till her violence wore itself away. "Yes, indeed, ma'am," she at length resumed, drying her eyes, and endeavouring to conquer her sobs, that she might relate her injuries distinctly. "I never can abide here no longer, like a stock-fish for a parcel o' fools, and thieves, and liars, and baggages, to turn into sport. I've been made game on o'er long."

"These are strong epithets," said Felicia, gravely.

"And true as strong, ma'am," said Jenny, whose wrath was too great to allow her to see Felicia's displeasure, "and I'll prove my words; for doesn't the cook tell all manner of things, which I should scorn to tell, only she is so saucy; and doesn't Miss Rosalind's maid give her company to every lounging tassel that slives after her, for no good, as I just now telled her — for no good, as she will find to her cost."

"But, admitting these heavy charges to be facts," said Felicia, "would it not be better in you to keep aloof from such society, rather than exasperate those you cannot alter?"

"And I did try to keep myself to myself, but all to no purpose; for they're set against me, because I'll not be 'hail fellow, well met,' with 'em, and have told Miss Rosalind's madam a spice of my mind."

"And why did you?" said Felicia. "You know I have often entreated you to endeavour to keep on terms with her, as she is my sister's favourite servant, and admonished you to conquer your temper. Indeed, Jenny, I fear if you attended to my counsels, you would not have met with so many mortifications."

"I did," cried Jenny. "If I had not, I should have boxed her ears, a saucy, good-for-nothing quean."

"I insist upon it," said Felicia, "that you do not ——"

"Indeed, indeed," sobbed Jenny, "I was not to blame, Miss Felicia, and indeed you shall hear all how and about it. I was sitting as quiet as could be in the servants' hall, and I seed a creeper upon Miss Juliana's gown; so as she is very nesh*, I goodnaturedly went and took it off. 'Miss Juliana,' says I, 'here's a twinge on your gown.' Well, instead o' being thankful for my striving to please her, she bursts out into a saucy glaver, and says, 'Oh law! Oh law! Mrs. Jenny, do you call an earwig a twinge?' Well, I was none so well pleased, you may be sartain, but I stomached it; and we sat pretty quiet, till Lord Edgermond's gentleman came in, and he and Miss Juliana have been

* Timid.

mightily civil of late — (he's a poor, sneaking, cringing, silly-looking jackanapes to my fancy!)—so there they whispered and whispered, till I said, meaning no harm, 'Dear, how grate you are, Miss Juliana and Mr. Jenkins! upon which she set up one of her halloos, and in came the footman and Martha the housemaid, and the cook, to make a scare with her.

"'Dear,' said Miss Juliana, 'I think we will set Mrs. Jenny's sayings down, they're so mighty comical;' and then they all jeered the more; but I would not seem to mind their jaw, though, thinks I, I'll be up to you, madam, some day. Well, after a bit,—it's a high wind, you know to day, ma'am,—and down came the smoke, as they call it; and I, thinking to leave without seeming to take to heart what they had said, says, 'Oh dear, how it puthers! don't you feel the reek? I can't abide it.' With that, there was such a noise, I could not hear mysen speak, and out took my lord's man a bit of a pocket book to set me down, you see, for a fool, Miss Juliana standing by, and telling him I meant smoke, just as if I was some outlandish natural as nobody could understand. Flesh and blood couldn't stand it no longer: so I plucked up my spirit, and I gave 'em as good as they brought. But what is one to half-a-dozen? Then what provoked me most was, to see my lord's man, with his sly, nimble, dainty, delicate fingers, that look as if he never did a hand's stir for his meat, writing down every word I said; so that I thought it best to get shut of them. 'Good riddance of bad rubbish,' said I; and if you'll believe me Miss,"—tears of shame again rolled over her face,—“they followed me, asking me to say good riddance over again, for fear they had not got it right set down, almost to your door.”

At this recollection of the indignities offered to her understanding, her rage again blazed forth with such violence as to impede further utterance, and sobs of convulsive passion shook her frame. Here ceased her mortifying relation; and with her delicate white apron held to her eyes, she waited in clamorous grief, while Felicia with pain dwelt upon her narrative. Jenny's native desire to oblige was so well known to her, that she doubted not she had endured much of a disagreeable nature ere her habitual sweetness of temper was roused to its present acrimony. Yet she could not interfere in her behalf against the domestic of Lady Wyedale, and the favourite servant of Rosalind; and only by soothing the irritated temper of poor Jenny, could she hope to effect any alteration in their behaviour.

"You do not, indeed, appear the aggressor," said she, after a pause; "but still, as they are the servants of my aunt, I hope you will overlook their behaviour, and keep yourself so entirely from them, that they can have no opportunity of ill-treating you. I will do all I can to render your place agreeable to you, and, for my sake, I trust you will forget this unmerited behaviour."

Jenny wept again; but her tears now flowed from a better

source. "Indeed I wish to stay, dear Miss Felicia, if I can : if they will only let me alone, I shan't meddle with them."

"Well said, Jenny," replied Felicia ; "now you are evincing how much you have profited by the example and instruction of my poor aunt——" her voice faltered. "We have all our trials, and must endeavour to bear them with patience and meekness. I have mine——"

"Oh ! yes," sobbed Jenny, "I know you have, dear, sweet Miss Felicia ; and that's it which makes me so very bitter against Miss Juliana. Never, no never, would I have presumed to hint no such a thing before ; but as you have pleased to say it, Miss Felicia, of your own head and accord, oh, I will make bold to say, how it goes to my heart, to see such *collections* and doings between Mr. Evanmore and Miss Rosalind."

Felicia turned very pale, and walked to the window to conceal her agitation. The stroke was so sudden, she had not power to speak.

"Even the other servants say it is too bad. And what provoked me, worse than all the rest, this blessed morning, was, when I said, 'Well, Miss Juliana, I shall soon be out of your gait ; my lady will soon be married, and then I shall be shut of you ;' she said, with a sly scornful leer, 'Don't reckon your chickens afore they're hatched.' 'What,' says I (for I knew what she was after), 'do you have the impudence to say as how Mr. Evanmore will leave my young lady to marry Miss Rosalind ?' With that she fired up and said, with a courtesy, 'No, Miss Jenny, I don't say as *how* Mr. Evanmore will marry Miss Rosalind ; she'll not take up with such as he, I've a notion ; but anybody may see who he would like to have ; but he knows Miss Rosalind looks higher than a pitiful thousand a year ; and then she winked at my Lord Edgermond's gentleman, and he said, 'Yes, indeed, Mr. Evanmore would be no match for Miss Rosalind.' 'What,' says I, 'when he is good enough for my lady ! He not fit for her, forsooth ! with all her flirting, fly-be-sky ways ! My mistress is before her any day. She's not fit to hold a candle to her sister, I tell you, you good-for-nothing saucy hussy.'"

"I am sorry your attachment to me led you to speak disrespectfully of my sister," said Felicia, till then utterly unable from agitation to articulate a single monosyllable, by a mighty effort concealing her tremulous tones, as she still stood with her back to the exasperated Jenny. "Never let it again hurry you so far away. My sister is very lively, and, perhaps, inconsiderate ; but she is most amiable ; and I am sure she would be incapable of endeavouring to alienate Mr. Evanmore's affections from me. I shall be much offended if you ever presume to hint this subject to me again."

"I hope, ma'am, 'tis as you say," said Jenny, still sobbing ; "but, indeed, indeed, ma'am, though I say it, that perhaps should

not say it, Miss Rosalind has a very enticing eye, and a way with her, that, somehow, always makes the gentlemen look at her a second time. And even Miss Juliana herself said, when she came from Brighton, it was too bad while you were tenting and tantling about my Lady Wyedale, for Miss Rosalind and Mr. Evanmore to be a seeing of all the grand sights by themselves, and riding all over the country on donkies, or Jerusalem ponies, as they call them, wickedly enough to my mind."

"Silence!" said Felicia, in a tone that instantly struck Jenny dumb.

Shrinking from the idea of exposing to Jenny how painfully she had been affected by her unexpected betrayal of the light in which Evanmore was regarded in the household, Felicia then exerted herself to repress her augmented anguish. The dinner-bell rung as she finished the irksome duties of the toilet, and after desiring Jenny to finish some work she had previously given her, in a tone calculated to appease her uneasiness and alarm, she descended to the saloon, a prey to feelings it would be idle to attempt to portray.

She had not the most remote suspicion that Rosalind had ever seriously wished to estrange Evanmore from her; but she now began to believe her witcheries had, without design, acquired dominion over him—remembered his warm encomiums of her beauty, her wit, her elegance—his desire to consult her opinion, his respect for her judgment. The tears of disappointed affection and wounded pride, that this idea called to her eyes, were accompanied by a sensation of yet more acute anguish, at the reflection that Evanmore could not thus have forgotten his sacred engagement to herself, had their views, principles, or pursuits been any longer in unison.

"Yes, I fear it is all over," she cried, when Lady Wyedale and Rosalind had retired to dress, and she found herself left alone in the solitary drawing-room. "At least the time for that explanation I have so long deferred is arrived; and though Evanmore may not yet feel Rosalind's power so deeply as to wish to separate from me, I must tear myself from him if——" Her faltering tongue refused to proceed; and, leaning her head on her hand, she gave way to the anguish that swelled her bosom.

From this ebullition of grief, she was roused by a double rap at the front door. "Evanmore!" she cried; and hastily dashing the tears from her eyes, she waited his approach. Immersed in reflection, she had omitted to ring for candles; and by the uncertain light of the fire, Evanmore saw only that she looked very grave. Something like a sense of conscious unkindness stole over his bosom, and damped the pleasure he had been trying to persuade himself he should experience at the masquerade. He drew his chair closer to hers, and fondly took her hand.

"Dear Felicia," he cried, "I wish you were going with me

this evening. I shall have little pleasure without you. Why will you not comply with my wishes?"

"Evanmore, you know my reasons for declining. Oh! that you could assign any half as satisfactory to my feelings, as those I have avowed must be to yours."

Evanmore felt affected. "Nay, Felicia, you must not think me unkind. You know me too well——" A servant at that moment entered with lights, and ere they could resume the conversation thus interrupted, Rosalind burst upon their privacy in her masquerade habit.

Never had she looked more lovely, more transcendently beautiful; and Felicia forgot her chagrin as she stood instinctively still to view her. Light drapery of blue gauze edged with ermine, floating over white satin, displayed the graceful form it affected to conceal. The short petticoat carelessly looped up in front by a diamond star, betrayed the symmetry of her exquisitely proportioned sandaled foot and ankle. Luxuriant curls of pale brown glossy hair seemed to disdain the restraint of her diamond comb, and at intervals waved over the brilliant crescent that sparkled on her polished forehead. A small golden quiver, suspended by a costly chain of the same material, was gracefully thrown over her finely formed shoulders, and an arrow of masterly workmanship glittered in the ivory hand that held it. Her dark eye shone in the liquid brilliancy of youth "elate and gay." Her radiant complexion glowed with a tint of more than usually rich carmine; and the sportive smile of joy and triumph that lighted up her fascinating features, revealed the exquisite formation of her mouth, the dazzling lustre of the pearly teeth—just peeping from between the coral lips.

"Glittering in beauty and in innocence—
A radiant vision in her joy she moved:
More like a poet's dream, in form divine,
Heaven's prototype of perfect womanhood,
So lovely was the presence, than a thing
Of earth, and perishable elements."

Evanmore gazed at her with blended feelings of admiration and astonishment. "We will call you Luna," cried he, "queen of the night. Yet no, not Luna, for that implies a borrowed light; and yours, fair goddess, is no reflected lustre. Rather should you have chosen the character of Juno, for you are peerless. How proud will Osborne be to-night!"

"Osborne!" repeated she, in a tone of mortification. "Oh! true, he is to be there. I had forgotten that."

"The claims of love should never be forgotten," said Felicia, in a low voice.

Evanmore looked earnestly at her, and saw the traces of tears on her pale cheek. "Rosalind!" he cried, in a hesitating voice, "I believe—I think—I cannot—indeed my dear Felicia——"

Lady Wyedale entered. "All is ready," said Rosalind, taking

his arm. "Come along, man; and, I say, remember you keep yourself ready for waltzing, when I call upon you to exhibit with me. I shall not choose to cut any capers with Osborne, at Lady Clarinda's, I can tell him."

The compliment—the prospect of dancing with such a partner—conquered Evanmore's rising scruples. "Good night, dear Felicia," said he; she did not speak—he turned to look at her as he left the room—she was leaning with her head on her arm, her face bent on the ground; and again a suspicion that he was wrong in leaving her thus lonely and dejected, thrilled through his heart. He stopped.

"Evanmore," cried Rosalind, as he still lingered at the door, "why don't you give your arm to my aunt?" He started, apologised, and instantly obeyed; but his eye rested on Felicia; and when she vanished from his sight, her melancholy figure still pursued him.

"I will not leave her again," he thought, as he stepped into the carriage; and with this resolution, he tried to banish the uneasy sensations that incapacitated him from feeling all the happiness he had anticipated from his initiation into the mysteries and joys of a masquerade.

The silent hour when "busy crowds retire to revel or to rest," was passed by Felicia in earnest self-examination, and bathed in the bitter tears which are wrung by the unkindness of those we love.

It was a cold dark night; the wind rose and fell in gusts, or died away in low sullen moans; and an expiring fire, feebly glimmering in the grate, involved the room in a shade of melancholy obscurity. The square was deserted; and the domestics of Lady Wyedale, at a great distance from her, interrupted not the dreary stillness around. As she sat lonely in her apartment, a feeling of chilly desolateness stole over her heart, and once she half questioned the propriety and expediency of pursuing that rigid system of self-denial which had subjected her to so severe a disappointment.

"Surely," she murmured, as she reviewed the motives of her conduct, "this springs not from obstinate adherence to my own prejudices; but results from a sense of duty. And he who is to be the guardian of my happiness and honour, ought not to despise or condemn these struggles to acquire the perfection of the Christian character. No; I may be mistaken, but I can commit no error in refusing to enter scenes from which I could derive no pleasures to compensate for the apprehension of their being wrong. I might, perhaps, a few months ago, have flattered myself that ardent attachment would imperceptibly impel him to a closer union with me on these points; for sometimes the wife is dearer than the bride. But to whom? To him whose principles are strong enough to survive the decay of beauty—who is alive to the charms of domestic life—not, alas! to one, whose

hopes of happiness centre in seeing the wife of his bosom—the protectress of his honour—the mother of his children—the bauble of a ball-room. Not, alas! to him who, as a lover, could refuse the petition of her whose heart he knew was devoted to him;—that he might partake of a trifling gratification, could leave her lonely, dejected, and displeased.”

Rising sobs interrupted this mournful soliloquy. She not only saw the inconsistency of the hope, that he would ever become the firm guardian of the principles of another, whose own she had so much reason to fear were doubtful, but with anguish perceived that she might become a *neglected* wife, if united to one so little capable of esteeming her character, or appreciating her feelings. As this idea presented itself to her tortured mind, she seized a sheet of paper—wrote a few hurried lines to request that he would visit her at twelve the next morning, as she particularly desired a private interview with him; and then threw herself on her bed, with the agony of one who feels that all earthly happiness has passed away.

CHAP. XIX.

“I’ll beg one boon,
And then be gone and trouble you no more.
Shall I obtain it?”

SHAKESPEARE.

FELICIA had been accustomed, when Evanmore escorted Rosalind to any scene of amusement, to await their return; and in defiance of his secret fear that she would rather he had not been her companion, Evanmore used to feel the evening’s entertainment increased and perpetuated by communicating to her every little incident that had occurred. Never had he returned from any public place with half so much to reveal. Yet something within him seemed to whisper, as he drove home from Lady Clarinda Lovelace’s, he could not attempt to relate what had passed at the fairy residence he had left.

In defiance of his anxious wish, on this occasion, to banish her from his mind, her melancholy figure haunted him through the evening; and though the partner of the queen of the night, as Rosalind had really proved, once or twice he half wished he had not been there to share her glories. When the carriage stopped, his heart fluttered, from an indistinct apprehension that she would not meet him with her customary kindness. He sprang up the stairs, and eagerly threw open the drawing-room door; but she was not there. It was the first time she had not remained to welcome his return, and he felt instantaneously that involuntary chill, which, however it may be laughed at as superstitious, we sometimes experience on the eve of misfortune. The chair she had occupied at their parting, remained in its former position;

and he was standing, his eyes instinctively bent upon it, when Rosalind perceived the note Felicia had ordered to be left for him lying on the table.

"Evanmore, a *billet-doux* for you!" she said, holding it up. He hastily seized it, and tore it open. "Ah!" she laughingly cried, watching the uneasiness that stole over his face, "it is as I suspected. You must eat humble pie for this to-morrow, young man."

Evanmore blushed. To be laughed at was poison to his soul, and after attempting to retaliate upon her some part of her own conduct during the evening, he carelessly put it into his pocket, and wished her good night, with a smile of gaiety that ill agreed with his real feelings.

He returned to his lodgings with far less hilarity than he had left them. He saw from the tenor of Felicia's note she was deeply hurt; and he had little doubt the interview she requested was, to expostulate with him on the unkindness of his conduct, or the laxity, as she might esteem it, of his principles. He was, however, too weary to pursue these unpleasant ruminations very long, and, assured from Felicia's attachment he should not have much to apprehend, he dropped asleep. From that long deep slumber, which is often the result of excessive fatigue, he awoke with an excruciating head-ache. Every object seemed to swim before his eyes; and languidly looking at his watch, as he recollected his appointment with Felicia, he saw it was already two hours past the period she had fixed. At first he was hurt at this circumstance, but he had never felt more inclined to indulge in bed; and as, with a reluctant yawn, he endeavoured to rise, he began to question Felicia's right to call him to any severe account for partaking of an amusement which he deemed perfectly innocent. "It was sufficient that she was allowed to indulge her own prejudices without restraint; he had not thought of being really angry with her for refusing to accept Lady Clarinda's invitation; she, therefore, ought not to resent his having gratified his wishes by going." Still he was neither quite satisfied with his own arguments, nor quite so much assured their interview would terminate pleasantly, as when he retired to rest. He called to remembrance the many hints she had given him of her wish, that he should spend that evening with her; the many allusions she had made to Lady Clarinda's character, and the peculiar dislike she had expressed to a masquerade, considered as an amusement. With these recollections mingled the artful insinuations Lady Wyedale had so often thrown out, relative to her misplaced zeal in the cause of religion. And the laugh with which Rosalind had witnessed any little act of supposed self-denial, or scrupulous regard to decorum, rung in his ear.

As he pursued these reminiscences, Evanmore grew unconsciously out of temper. He had, indeed, a secret conviction on his own mind, in defiance of these endeavours to convince him-

self he was right, that he was not altogether without blame; and, as that is a sensation which seldom fails to increase previous irritation, Evanmore at length worked himself up to a state bordering as much on ill-humour, as a sensible, amiable man can feel, when he knows he has received no real provocation.

As he approached the square, the remembrance of Rosalind's raillery did not tend to soothe him into a more complacent state of mind; and when, as he passed up the grand staircase, he caught a view of her head, peeping through an adjacent door, with a smile of indescribable fun, he felt half-tempted to refuse the explanation Felicia demanded. Before, however, he could determine on this line of conduct, she withdrew her head with an expressive shake of roguish pity, and he found himself in the library. Felicia was already there, and scarcely knowing what to do, he stammered out something like an apology for his delay; but he did not state that it arose from indisposition, and his cheek, flushed by shame, wore no trace of the pain that racked his head.

Felicia heard him in silence. His remissness naturally struck her as a further instance of indifference to her feelings, and in his distant air and reserved manner, she read so much alienation, that wounded pride giving additional energy to her mind, she entered at once, with more firmness than she had previously believed possible, upon the motive for her request to see him alone. Evanmore listened in astonishment too great to be concealed. He had come expecting remonstrance, tears, and reproaches—a display of feminine violence, in short, mingled with feminine tenderness; and he had prepared himself for the attack in the shape he expected it. But he was wholly unqualified to reply to arguments, urged with the mild, yet firm dignity of conscious truth, or realise to himself the probability of a separation from a woman he had so long considered as a wife. It was his pride to believe, that she adored him; and he had been so accustomed to hear himself represented as a young man of even exemplary morals, that resentment mingled with the uneasiness he felt at her supposed alienation.

"These are strange changes, Miss Leycester," said he coldly, when she finished that painful duty she had so long been trying to acquire fortitude to perform, "and utterly unapprehensive of the possibility of your either advancing or acting upon them, I can only generally say, I consider your conduct as evincing a degree of injustice and personal unkindness, which you could not have manifested had your own heart and principles remained the same as at Leominster. I may, indeed, have said, when your continual recurrence to religious topics induced me to fear such might be the result of that overstrained apprehension of doing wrong, which I daily witnessed, I trusted you would never be an enthusiast; and that I had reason to fear the growth of such sentiments, is too well established by your coolly telling me, that

our sentiments are now so opposite, you cannot conscientiously fulfil an engagement, voluntarily entered into, nearly two years ago, and sanctioned by the approbation of her you considered as a sainted parent."

"I am not aware that I have been in the habit of making continual allusions to religious topics, unless I may have been led to do so lately from a suspicion that your opinions were undergoing a great and unhappy change, and a remote, but idle hope, that my sentiments might influence yours. And even if I did sometimes direct your attention to such points, is it wrong to allude to the doctrines and duties of religion in the social conversation of the nearest and dearest relatives or friends? May every subject, but the one essential to our happiness, both in this and future ages, be freely discussed? I would not wish to make the glorious truths of Christianity a common, indifferent topic; but surely the sublime momentous subject might be introduced without exciting disgust and astonishment! That our sentiments on these points have undergone such a variation, that I fear I can no longer permit myself to unite my fate to yours, is most true; but in yours, Evanmore, has the change been effected. My aunt did indeed sanction our attachment, but it was from a conviction that you thought as we thought on these most important subjects, and, you know, you told me at Brighton you esteemed her unnecessarily strict in the discharge of her duty."

There are few things more annoying in controversy than to find the ground on which we fancied we had built a firm argument recede from our feet, of anything more mortifying than to have our own contrary opinions at a former period judiciously turned against us by our antagonist. Evanmore had relied on the weight he derived from Mrs. Beauchere's good opinion; and, unable to confute or qualify away what he now perfectly remembered to have said, he replied with considerable bitterness, that he still maintained the same opinion.

"Am I then to be esteemed an enthusiast for saying, that he to whose guidance I entrust not only my present but future happiness must be influenced by principles that will render him the safe guardian of so sacred a deposit? You ought to regulate my conduct, strengthen my faith, guide my footsteps! And, oh! Evanmore, should I not also be deprived, by an union with one whose feelings were at variance with mine, of that surest cement of faithful friendship and domestic love, unbounded confidence? Could I communicate the hopes, the fears, the weaknesses, the joys experienced by every anxious member of Christianity, to one who not only could be no participator in my feelings, but who despised them? What Egyptian darkness must environ — what sickening solitariness must encompass — that heart which cannot repose on the bosom of a husband? The hoarded secret treasured in grief would swell to anguish, and the desolate spirit sink into utter despair."

"Dearest Felicia, we must not carry this little misunderstanding too far," said Evanmore, feelings of resentment gradually giving way to reviving tenderness. "We must not thus destroy an affection begun in childhood, and confirmed in youth."

"Destroy it!" repeated she, tears rushing into her eyes. "Oh! Evanmore, you know not what it has cost me thus to address you; and, if on cool reflection—if on a serious reconsideration of those precepts by which you are guided, you can lay your hand on your heart, and say, your opinions have undergone no material revolution since you left Dorsetshire, we may yet again——" her voice faltered. "But if, after dispassionate thought, and well considering all I have said, you cannot resolve to relinquish your present pursuits, I must persevere—my peace, my conscience is involved. We are probationers; and aware of the vanity and shortness of life—shall we risk the happiness of eternity, to partake, at best, of doubtful pleasures? No, I cannot, with such a prize in view, hazard the prospect of immortality."

"Felicia," he replied, in an accent of decision new to him, "it would be disingenuous and dishonourable if, thus straightly questioned, I did not declare my opinions with the same unreserve as you have stated yours. I will affect no sentiments foreign to my real ones. I do esteem your aunt Beauclerc unnecessarily strict in carrying out her religious views. She was an excellent woman; but early disappointment had given a stern bias to her mind. I can never be made to see the iniquity of a ball or a play—*honi soit qui mal y pense!* They are not injurious to my morals; and, I am sure, I can equally answer for yours. Nor yet will I admit that there is sinfulness in freely enjoying the blessings by which we are surrounded. But I love you dearly as ever, notwithstanding the difference in our views on this subject. If you interfere not with what I consider innocent amusements, I will not only never urge you to join in them, but respect even the scruples by which I am uninfluenced. Yes, dearest, I pledge my honour, and that you do not distrust, that never will I, either by word or look, intimate disapprobation of your plan of life, or your mode of spending your days. Come, then, I entreat you, let us bury the pain in oblivion. I am sincerely sorry that I have, it appears, pained you—it was unintentional, you may rest assured, my love." He looked anxiously at her, hastily advanced towards her; and, taking her hand kindly, seated himself near her on the sofa.

"Evanmore!" said Felicia, withdrawing her hand with the energy of one who feels a sense of injury and injustice, "when have I said I saw any iniquity in a ball or a play? Have I not accompanied you to each? And have I not frequently declared it was the abuse, not use, of public amusements which I deprecated? The justice of my dislike to the avidity with which you have resorted to such scenes is too well proved by their having alienated your mind from me. Day after day—night after night

—have I (united to you by one of the nearest and dearest of ties) been left alone and dejected, while you were the companion of my sister, or some other whose principles I had too much reason to fear might undermine yours. Gradually I have perceived your estrangement from all that we once mutually prized and esteemed. Even now, what is the offer you have made me?—what is the reparation I am to receive for the unnumbered slights I have personally endured?—what is the pledge of your sincerity, where to be insincere is fatal?—what is the proof that your attachment is strong enough to brave those trials to which it must be exposed during a connection which can terminate only with our existence—that you will not interfere with my absurd scruples (for such is the construction I cannot but place on your words), if I will permit you to continue the same course which has already caused me so much pain—already proved so dangerous to our peace? No, Evanmore, these are not terms to which either my pride, or my love, or my duty, will permit me to accede!”

Evanmore remained silent a moment. What would Rosalind think—what would the world think—should he comply? flitted through his fancy. “Come, let us forget the past,” he at length cried, as his eye glanced on Felicia’s agitated face, down which unbidden tears she vainly struggled to check were rapidly coursing, and he felt his confidence in her attachment revive. “Come, let us forget the past, and like all other lovers’ quarrels, let this be the renewal of affection between us.”

Felicia mournfully waved her head.

“Are we then to part for ever?” said he, in a tone of tender reproach.

“I have, alas! no option. It is vain again to repeat what I have already so often declared, that I dare not now make you the arbiter of my fate, the guide of my conduct—cannot consent to continue an engagement which shall even authorise one on whom I solely depend for happiness, to find his where I am not. No, you must seek some other less fastidious; and yet—oh no! rather attach yourself to one more capable, far than I, of leading you back again into the narrower but safer path to happiness.”

“Be it so!” he cried, quick resentment lighting up every feature. “And while you derive gratification from thinking you had some plea for separating from me, let me not be without consolation in reflecting, that I have escaped a woman whose heart is not sufficiently warm to appreciate the tenderness of mine; whose scruples and doubts might have poisoned the most harmless enjoyments of our nature, and converted my home into a scene of idle disquisition, and polemical debate.”

“Evanmore!” said Felicia, viewing him with melancholy astonishment, “all is now indeed over between us; be not, however, deceived. My aunt, in her last moments, entreated me to no earthly love engross the best affections of my soul, and I

will obey her, though it cost me, even you. What I have, what I shall suffer, can be known only to myself; for while I have little reason to hope that I possess sufficient influence over your mind to effect the slightest alteration in your sentiments, I dread to leave you in them. Yet let the consideration, that my advice is disinterested as it is sincere, have some weight with you. Scorn not the last fond entreaty of one who would have sacrificed for you everything but this; and allow me to implore, you will review in the privacy of your own home those principles you profess. To remember that you are an accountable being, created for immortality. And oh! do not be deluded—happiness, honour, and respectability will never be the inmates of your house, unless you seek one whose powers of persuasion shall be stronger than mine—whose firmness and piety may rescue you from the attractions of the world, which now absorbs your every thought and desire.” She clasped her hands to her face, and, exclaiming in a hurried voice, “Evanmore! may we meet again in another—where there is no marrying nor giving in marriage—and may God bless you and prosper you in this! Farewell! Farewell!” rushed from the room.

CHAP. XX.

“But they who have loved the fondest, the purest,
Too often have wept o’er the dream they believed;
And the heart that has slumbered in friendship securest,
Is happy indeed if ’twas never deceived.” MOORE.

SUCH was the result of Felicia’s explanation with Evanmore; and those only who have felt what it was to have the cup of happiness dashed from their lips, at the moment they were preparing to taste it: those only who have felt what it was to lose the object in whom had centred their fondest affections: those only who have endured the anguish which arises from a conviction, that they have ceased to inspire sentiments of attachment in that bosom which once panted only for them, can appreciate the agony of Felicia’s heart, as she tore herself from the presence of Evanmore, convinced, that though he might not still wish to separate from her, she had no longer reason to believe that she possessed sufficient influence over either his heart or his understanding, to afford any hope of their ultimate reunion. Henceforth their journey through the world’s wilderness must be taken alone and alas! widely apart! After a few hours of perturbed sleep, she had awoke, and shuddered to think it was the dawn of that day which might separate her from Evanmore. The remembrance of the innocent pleasures of their early youth, their long intimacy, the close and dear connection that had subsisted between them nearly two years, augmented the anguish she endured. She

passed the weary hours in revolving her intended arguments, and anticipating the impression they might make. Her heart throbbed as she dreaded, yet wished-for, moment arrived, and the instant that sealed their separation was received as the death-blow to her future happiness: nor were Evanmore's own sensations much less acute. For many minutes after Felicia disappeared, he continued to gaze on the door which had shut her from his view. Was it possible? had Felicia really resigned him? could an engagement, which once promised to be the harbinger of a life of love and happiness, be indeed dissolved for ever? He could not realise the painful truth to his recoiling mind; and pressing his hands on his throbbing temples, he tried to recall his scattered senses. A foot, which he fancied to be Rosalind's, roused his dormant faculties; and springing up, he darted out of the library. At such a moment Rosalind's *badinage* would have driven him to distraction; and rushing down the stairs, he soon reached the hall. His hand was on the lock, when Jenny made her appearance from an adjoining breakfast-parlour. She was carrying some flowers to replenish the jars with which Felicia, he knew, delighted to adorn her apartment. She smiled, and, as she passed him, wished him good morning, in a tone that announced she was unacquainted with the dreadful termination of his interview with her beloved mistress. Evanmore felt suddenly affected. Her meeting him struck him as singular and ominous. He had already parted for ever with Felicia; and stopping, he said in a low voice, "Jenny, I wish you farewell—God bless you—here is something to remind you of me. I know I need not bid you be faithful to ——" he could not say Felicia. Jenny turned very pale. "I see you are surprised, but I am going to leave London. You will soon learn that I shall never be your master: he hastily turned from her, and attempted to open the door.

"Oh, sir!" she cried, with an emotion that distanced all ceremony, grasping his arm as she spoke, and drawing him into the parlour, "do not—do not say so! Oh, sir! I never thought things would come to this pass. Oh, my poor lady! Take back your money, sir," and she tossed it into his hand.

"Jenny," said he, in a faltering voice, "I am sure I have injured your mistress. She has refused to —"

"Oh, but, sir, consider," —
 "Consider, sir, my lady's agitation. Don't go away? She refused the very ground under my feet. I know it! Yes, I know it! It has been shocking. That's what she has said."
 "Tell her I am sorry,"
 "Jenny's sorrowful face told that I should not —"

London to-night." He threw the note he had offered her on the floor, and exclaiming, "Farewell!" flung out of the house. With hurried steps he reached his lodgings, gave his servant orders to prepare for their immediate departure, and in the bustle of his arrangements tried to bury the remembrance of this first bitter disappointment he had ever sustained.

Evanmore was the idolised son of a widow, who, considering him the only pledge of her union with an amiable man, and the sole survivor of a numerous group of sickly children, saw in his native sweetness of temper, not the promise, but fruition of every virtue; and who would have thought it equally cruel, and equally unnecessary, to banish him from his paternal roof to acquire under any other, those habits of patient perseverance and firm continuance in that path of virtue to which his natural inclination led him. Grateful for her attention to him during a long illness, and assured from her doating attachment to her child, she would never abuse the trust reposed in her, Mr. Evanmore left her the sole guardian of his son. Alas! he was not aware, that this testimony of a husband's regard should never be bequeathed but to one capable of discharging its solemn duties. Mrs. Evanmore indeed loved him, but it was with an excess that rendered her blind to his faults. She wished him all that was good, and her own conduct did not contradict the vague, indefinite, advice she now and then indirectly, as it seemed, gave him, to be virtuous: for she was quiet, sweet-tempered, and when her desire after goodness did not clash with her wish to acquiesce in the opinions of society, inclined to be what is called "*serious*." But she wanted the calm, inflexible disposition and steady rectitude which, tempered by the winning softness of the female character, is so peculiarly calculated to lead the mind of youth to settled habits of virtue. She lived as much as she possibly could in conformity to the Scriptures and the world, and every effort of her mind was exerted to unite the two contrary services of God and Mammon. She indulged in every pleasure not absolutely criminal without remorse: went to church on fair Sundays, and read her Bible on wet ones; but her studies were directed rather with a view to ascertain how far she might *safely* dispense with its obligations, than *cheerfully* comply with its requisitions. She had a numerous host of elevated acquaintance, and to rank in their estimation as a religious woman was not more the object of her ambition, than to be considered by them a methodist was her unceasing terror. Unwilling to deprive herself of the society of her son, on the death of his father she immediately removed him from the residence of a clergyman, with whom he had spent the first few years devoted to education; and after procuring for him the attendance of a neighbouring gentleman, whose only duty it was to instruct him in Latin and Greek for some hours daily, felt satisfied she had done everything that wisdom could advise, or attachment suggest, to promote the well-being and

happiness of her child. Her maternal tenderness was the theme of much conversation and applause among her friends; and Evanmore, grateful for her kindness, and pleased with his change of situation, soon learnt to esteem her not only as the best, but most sensible of parents. The dangerous passage, therefore, from infancy to age, spent under the superintendence of such a guide, beheld him at its close an affectionate son, a kind friend, an easy master, and an amiable man. But the faults of an injudicious education had aggravated the weak points of his character; and the natural sweetness and indolence of his youth was succeeded by a manhood devoid of the least spark of firm decision; control over his own feelings; mental strength to defend what his better judgment whispered was right; or fortitude of mind sufficient to withstand the sneer of those he even despised. But these were failings not likely to be perceived in the calm tranquillity of a country residence. There his attachment to his mother, his complying temper, generous disposition, and regular habits, were the subject of universal admiration; and Felicia, delighted with a character so seemingly in unison with her own, implicitly believed this congeniality to be produced by the same principles as those by which she was actuated. She knew not, that the feeble barrier which his mother had opposed to the influx of the passions, was not the sincere desire of pleasing his Creator, but fear of incurring His wrath, mingled with a yet greater apprehension of exciting the ridicule and disapprobation of his fellow mortals; or she would, young as she was, have felt no astonishment on perceiving that it was too weak to resist the temptations of active life. She was not aware, that when Evanmore seemed to coincide with Mrs. Beaucherc and herself on all those essential subjects where they now disagreed, his opinion was more the result of natural politeness to the one and love for the other, than any real conviction that they were founded in truth: not that Evanmore intended to deceive either. Mrs. Beaucherc stood so high in the country, he would have deemed it almost presumption to question any of her decisions, and he was so much accustomed to hear Felicia represented as a lovely, pleasing, superior young woman, that, independently of his personal attachment, he believed she could not err; and taught to depend, not on his own judgment, but that of others, while at Leominster he felt inclined to follow, without either hesitation or investigation, the path they pointed out. It is, indeed, scarcely possible for the mind to contemplate that of a beloved object without imperceptibly imbibing a something of its colouring, unconsciously contracting similar ideas and dispositions. When, however, the scene changed, and he found that Felicia and her aunt were mutually regarded as enthusiasts and persons unacquainted with the customs and sentiments of fashionable life, he began to waver. He was like theameleon, whose tints are varied by those of each changing object, and he soon

found himself perpetually vibrating between an innate propensity to rectitude, and a slavish fear of being deemed a bigot, should he pursue the secret bias of his own heart. He still considered Felicia with the most undivided attachment; but his mother's fears of singularity, united to a disinclination to excite notoriety, rendered him almost afraid Felicia might carry her country prejudices too far. His mother, to whom he naturally stated this revolution in his sentiments, did not contribute to allay his alarms.

Mrs. Evanmore had been a little hurt at the disposition of Mrs. Beauclerc's fortune; and a little more at Rosalind's retaining what she believed could be no real object to her. She had also hopes, that Felicia's residence with Lady Wyedale would tend to awaken her interest in that quarter; and had, therefore, learnt, with considerable mortification, her ladyship's unkindness, and the small probability there existed of her inheriting anything from her. These feelings were increased by the idea, that Lady Wyedale's antipathy to her future daughter-in-law arose from the unnatural strictness of her religious opinions; and, unwilling to sacrifice so great a stake to punctilios, she strenuously advised Evanmore to conciliate her ladyship's favour, by agreeing with her on those points which she conceived were the source of her ladyship's dislike. "No one," she declared, "could be more zealous in the cause of religion than herself; but even she thought, where people agreed in essentials, minor considerations ought to be sacrificed, that peace and happiness might be preserved in families. Nobody could entertain a more profound respect for Mrs. Beauclerc than she did; but unquestionably many most excellent and superior persons had thought her a little too rigid; and she hoped Miss Leycester's natural good sense would enable her to see, that it was impossible to act in a very genteel circle exactly the same as she had done in a retired village like Leominster, and that her native modesty would shrink from pursuing a line of conduct that must, ere long, expose her to the observation and ridicule of her acquaintance."

Evanmore was too generous to be inclined to pay Lady Wyedale attentions merely from the hope of securing a legacy at her death; and too much in love, to care whether Felicia brought him two or twenty thousand pounds; but these remarks confirming his fears relative to her, and sanctioning his own desire to partake of amusements from which he derived so much pleasure, he gradually learnt, under the bewitching sorcery of Rosalind, to think her a visionary, and to pursue his own inclinations without regard to her evident dissatisfaction.

When dejected and fatigued by the haste with which he left London, he suddenly entered the room where his mother was sitting, she felt a degree of alarm, which was little abated by learning that the advice she had given him had terminated in the dissolution of his engagement with Felicia. But she was too

easy in disposition, and had too high an opinion of her son, long to remain under the influence of disappointment. She had long thought Felicia by no means an advantageous connection for him in point of fortune, and when she contemplated his fine person and graceful manners, improved by the high polish of the first society, with a mother's fond partiality she entertained no doubt he would marry much better.

"Don't look so melancholy, dear Henry," she cried, "for, as I told you before, Mrs. Beauclerc, though a most exemplary woman, certainly had peculiar notions, which her birth and talents alone enabled her to act upon without incurring the surprise or censure of the world; and Miss Leycester seems so bigoted to her aunt's opinions, I really think you have reason to be happy that she has declined your hand. You would not have liked to see your wife different from every other young man's, and you must be sensible, her fortune is so small, she could be considered no match for you, even had she been all we could wish; and, indeed, Henry, these are such singularities in so young a woman, the more I think of them, the more they astonish me. I am sure before I was married, I never thought of asking your poor father whether he had any predilection or antipathy to balls, or plays, or parties; and afterwards, I should as soon have flown as presumed to interfere with his amusements, or question his religious opinions, because, poor dear, good man, he liked races; nor did he doubt mine, because I always attended the steward's balls; and I am sure no two people could be happier; as a proof of that, he left me your sole guardian; and though I was only a little past thirty, I never would marry again, a most convincing testimony of unfeigned happiness and regard on both sides." By long habit she had acquired the power of shedding a few tears, whenever she alluded to her deceased husband; and Evanmore, who had so often heard of the extraordinary fidelity to his father, and love to himself, she had evinced by remaining a widow, that he thought he never could sufficiently appreciate such unparalleled heroism, forgot his own distress in his kind endeavours to banish this painful topic. Had he known the good lady was nearer forty than thirty when death deprived her of his father, and had really never been solicited to revoke her determination of living single for his sake by any one whose alliance would not have robbed her of her present station in society, he might not, perhaps, have felt so very grateful. But ignorant of these facts, he became more assured Felicia's conduct was indeed unreasonable and extraordinary.

"I would not have said all this," continued his mother, when she gained sufficient composure to revert to the original subject of their conversation, "had the engagement not been broken off between you; but now, I must confess, I think you may do much better."

"Oh! never, mother," said Evanmore.

"You think so now, because you are under the influence of disappointment; but you will some day find to the contrary. Why, I am sure any of the three Miss Blackstones, with ten thousand pounds each, would be happy to marry you."

"The Miss Blackstones! each ten years older than myself, to make up for the ten thousand."

"Well, then, the two Miss Vernons, with fifteen thousand a piece, and the prospect of five more at the death of an aunt already past her grand climacteric."

"You seem to forget one is lame, and the other squints; and both have the reputation of being confounded vixens."

"Come, then, now I am sure you can find no fault. What say you to Miss Leonora Caroline Desmond, with twenty thousand pounds independent of her father, pretty, young, amiable, and agreeable?"

"The merest little compound of milk and water, affectation, folly, and sentiment, I ever met with. Oh! no; no fainting, die-away, love-sick girl for me, mother. Had she forty, instead of twenty thousand, I would not marry a woman who shrieks at the sight of a grasshopper, and swoons at the sound of a pop-gun."

"Really you are very fastidious, Henry. And I now begin to think you will never be satisfied but with the lovely Rosalind Leycester."

"Rosalind Leycester marry me!" And he laughed aloud at the bare idea.

"And why not?" asked his mother. "You are sprung from an ancient family; and have a paternal estate of fifteen hundred a-year of your own. Indeed, I cannot see ——"

"Mother," said he, "putting my own inclinations and her engagement to Mr. Osborne out of the question, Rosalind Leycester will never be satisfied with anything less than a baronetage; and fifteen thousand a-year would not be to her so much as fifteen hundred to ——" he hesitated, he could not say Felicia — "her sister."

"But she will inherit Lady Wyedale's fortune."

"Not if she were to marry such a poor wretch as me, I promise you. Lady Wyedale, it is believed, was by no means pleased with her accepting Mr. Osborne, a man possessed of three thousand a-year, and the prospect of an addition at the death of a relative; and should she not fulfil her engagement with him, which would not excite my astonishment, depend upon it she will be influenced to do so by the hope of making a more splendid alliance."

"Oh! of that I am by no means sure," said his mother, who, like many other people, would not be convinced a favourite theory was a fallacious one. "Mr. Osborne had no family to boast of, and even if Lady Wyedale did not countenance your marriage, or forgive it before her death, which I think highly

improbable, so much attached to her as she appears, I do not agree with you in thinking Miss Rosalind would be sure to prove so very extravagant. It is not always that your gay, giddy girls turn out the worst wives. On the contrary, I often think, that after having seen all they can see, and enjoyed their youth as young people have a right to do, they become more settled. And after all, she could not frequent public places, or indulge in much dissipation, if she were mistress of Alverston."

"Which she will never be, my dear mother," said Evanmore, with a smile; "for I should as soon think of paying my addresses, with a rent-roll of fifteen hundred a-year, to a princess of the blood royal, as to Rosalind Leycester, even if I liked her; and before I shall be in any spirits to act the part of a lover again, she will have had opportunities of marrying fifty times over."

His mother prophesied otherwise; and though he laughed and shook his head at all her predictions, persisted in declaring she could not see the force of his arguments, or be brought to believe even Rosalind Leycester would consider him so unimportant a capture.

To these observations he listened with the same degree of incredulity he would have heard a fairy tale; for though, as he hinted, he had reason to think, after something that passed at the masquerade, she would not speedily become Mrs. Osborne, he so highly esteemed her personal attributes, that he had little doubt Lord Edgermond, unable to resist her many charms, would ere long declare himself her admirer. But her remarks on Mrs. Beauclerc tended to strengthen his persuasion, that Felicia was unnecessarily pious; and removed the half-formed determination he had made to enter into that review of his principles which she so earnestly advised. "I shall never love any other woman," thought he, as he retired to his room; "but I cannot compel her to marry me; and, perhaps, as we now so entirely disagree with each other, our separation is a mutual advantage."

His heart, however, remained sad, and the solitariness of Alverston seemed painfully increased by his alienation from Felicia, and his late residence in the metropolis.

CHAP. XXI.

"While yet the lover staid, the maid was strong,
But when he fled, she drooped, and felt the wrong." CRABBE.

"And is he gone?" — on a sudden solitude
How oft that fearful question will intrude!
"Twas but an instant past — and here he stood!
And now — without the portal's porch she rushed,
And then, at length, her tears in freedom gushed
Big — bright — and fast, unknown to her they fell,
But still her *heart* refused to send — 'Farewell!'
For in that word — that fatal word — howe'er
We promise — hope — believe — there breathes despair."

FROM the trance of waking sorrow into which Felicia was thrown by hearing Evanmore rush out of the library, she was aroused by Rosalind, who stole on tip-toe into the room, her finger pressed to her ruby lip, and her attitude that of a playful child, eager to learn some little secret, which it half suspects may be withheld.

"The captive has kissed his chains, I predict. Hey, what in tears!" she pursued, in an altered voice, as Felicia raised her streaming eyes.

It is difficult, when suffering under the pressure of severe disappointment, to avoid indistinctly censuring all who have been in any respect connected with the cause of our calamity; and, though she acquitted her of any intentional unkindness, Felicia turned involuntarily from the anxious gaze of her sister.

"Dearest, Felicia, relieve my uneasiness," said Rosalind. "Indeed, you know not how much I am affected at your distress. Where is Evanmore? Surely he has apologised?"

"Oh no, no!" cried Felicia, "he is gone — gone for ever from me!"

Rosalind's conscience smote her with a stronger feeling of remorse than she had ever before experienced. She remembered how continually she had interposed to determine Evanmore, when apparently wavering, to persist in a mode of life which she knew Felicia disapproved. And she asked herself, with increasing alarm, whether it were possible that the laughter and ridicule which she had so frequently levelled at Felicia's opinions, might have contributed to estrange him from her?

It is scarcely possible for any heart, however immersed in grief, to be so abstracted as to turn with indifference or disgust from the tone of real affection. As she witnessed Rosalind's evident uneasiness, Felicia felt her former confidence and attachment revive. "Yes," she cried, throwing herself on Rosalind's arm, while her voice was almost inarticulate from anguish, "Evanmore is lost! — in the wide world nothing is now left me but you!" Again Rosalind felt the stings of self-reproach. She had not intended to injure Felicia in the estimation of Evanmore, but she was conscious of having always felt a

desire to eclipse her in his eyes. Her blooming cheek lost its rosy tint—she bent over her weeping sister, and pressed her pale lips with lips almost as pale.

Rosalind's feelings were warm, and kindly, and her mind instinctively inclined to rectitude, but the former had never been fostered, and the finer perceptions of the latter were gradually becoming less sensitive. Her heart also, indurated by incessant scenes of dissipation, shrunk from the wearisome task of administering consolation to the sorrowful, or pursuing the thorny path of self-examination; and after endeavouring to soothe Felicia's anguish a few hours, she left her to lose, at a raffle, that sensation of uneasiness which a rapid and involuntary review of her own conduct had just occasioned.

It is not difficult to hush the small still voice with which conscience reproaches us for trivial errors, nor to find palliations for what we are determined shall not give us pain. Rosalind speedily forgot both Felicia and Evanmore, in her anxiety to possess a pair of diamond earrings; and when, on her return home with the glittering prize, she was reminded by Felicia's pallid face and sunken eyes of the events of the morning, she soon learnt to think that, though, to be sure, poor Felicia was just now much to be pitied, yet, after all, the dissolution of her engagement with Evanmore ought not to be seriously regretted. He never would have proved a fitting husband for one so starched and full of scruples in the first place, and in the next, there was no doubt so pretty, sensible, and amiable a girl would have it in her power to make a much superior connection; for Evanmore, though very handsome, and extremely good-tempered, and a man for whom she should always retain a sincere regard, was certainly scarcely a match for her." And, finally, ere the evening concluded, she not only ceased to lament whatever share she might have had directly or indirectly in causing this sudden alteration in Felicia's situation, but persuaded herself it was an event which ought to be regarded with satisfaction by all who loved her.

"Don't look so like 'Patience on a monument smiling at grief,' dearest Philly," said she, stooping to kiss Felicia's cold lips, as they separated for the night. "And pray go to sleep without thinking on what has passed. You know, dwelling on sorrow does not lighten the burthen; and, mark me if, some day, you will not rejoice at all this. I am not accustomed to moralise; but you know we are taught, good often comes out of evil, and in this instance I am confident all things are for the best." She concluded these remarks with a movement of the head, scarcely less confident than that of her cousin elect, Mrs. Hustleton, when silencing the arguments of an antagonist by pronouncing her
"-te expression, 'incontrovertible.'"

"Good night, dearest!" she cried once more, in a tone of pathy and playfulness that went to Felicia's heart.

"Stay a little while longer, Rosalind," she said, in a broken voice.

Rosalind complied; but she had no desire to discuss the cause of Evanmore's estrangement: she had passed the evening in a ball room, and was tired and sleepy; and having, like many other people, taught herself to view the misfortunes of those around her with heroic fortitude, she seized an early opportunity of retiring to her room.

Felicia's eyes followed her to the door.

"I would not have left her," she thought, "but I am not to her what she is to me. The strongest attachments are formed in retirement, not in the world. There is neither time nor opportunity for the play of the feelings—the expansion of the heart—in the whirl of her fashionable life."

Though it was not in Felicia's power to comply with her sister's advice, she exercised a higher degree of resignation. She could not close her eyes; but ere morning her agony gradually softened into a feeling of disappointment, severe, indeed, but not intolerable, for no self-reproach mingled with her grief. That Evanmore was lost to her for ever—that she should never more feel attachment towards any other human being—was her implicit conviction, and she wept with fresh emotion as she contemplated the wreck of those little fairy fabrics of domestic love and happiness which she had delighted to build.

"I shall indeed be lonely; but why should I mourn that I am destined to lead that life which my aunt led before me. Was she wretched, was she useless? I shall never be blessed with a husband's love, a child's caress; but shall I, in possession of so many blessings, dare to repine because this is denied me? No; Rosalind will marry, and that exalted pleasure she felt in succouring my infancy, in forming my mind, I may experience while watching and guiding my Rosalind's children. Even if deprived of her in whom now centres my every hope of earthly consolation, I will not despair. I am a pilgrim bound to a distant country, and my passage may be a dark one, but it must be short; and the gloominess of my path will render still brighter the glorious scene to which I am journeying. How often has my dear aunt enforced on my mind, that the guilty only are hopelessly miserable! Let me not waste, in the languor of unavailing sorrow, the talents with which I have been entrusted, or sully the happiness of others by indulging in selfish grief; and though lost to all the more tender connections of life, I shall not grieve without consolation; for the sacrifice of my affections will have been offered at the shrine of duty. This, then, shall be my polar star, and it will guide me through the dark hour when the spirit faints under so bitter a privation."

Such were the reflections and resolutions that calmed the first paroxysms of Felicia's anguish under this heavy affliction. But she was no heroine, and to say that these were her unvarying

feelings, would be to ascribe to her a degree of resignation and fortitude overstrained and unnatural. That Evanmore and herself had parted to meet no more, was the prominent thought of her mind; and vainly she strove to conceal her internal sufferings; the half-suppressed sigh, the variation of her complexion, the sudden contraction of her open brow, continually betrayed that she dwelt upon her loss. Vainly she arraigned herself for a weakness of which she was sensible, and determined to find consolation and joy in the steady perseverance with which she tried to discharge the duties of her present sphere: a feeling of desolation, a dreary loneliness sometimes enshrouded her soul, and at these moments of intense anguish, she became more aware of the immeasurable distance which exists between profession and practice. She who, while temptation was far distant, thought she could have risen superior to its sorest trials, was now obliged to summon every energy of her mind to subdue the complainings of a refractory heart.

The first hour of dawning serenity was devoted to writing a letter to Mrs. Marshington, acquainting her with the result of her *éclaircissement* with Evanmore, and the next to consoling her faithful attendant. Poor Jenny was in truth a sincere participator in her affliction; and when she could really bring her mind to believe that Mr. Evanmore would never be her master, felt almost as much grief as Felicia had experienced on perceiving that he could never be her husband. She delivered his message amid bursts of sorrow, and though Felicia's severe rebuke, when she hinted her opinion of Rosalind on the morning of the masquerade, restrained her from any similar indulgence of her resentment, she longed to pour out the bitterness of her wrath upon her for having, as she firmly believed, been the occasion of the misunderstanding which robbed her mistress of a lover, and herself of the exalted situation of housekeeper. In all her mortifications this had been her joy, her consolation; and she wept not more from blasted ambition, than the consciousness that her enemy, Miss Juliana, would rejoice at her disappointment.

As her mind resumed its former tone, and she began again to take an interest in those around her, Felicia perceived Rosalind was become unusually thoughtful, and remarked, for the first time, that Mr. Osborne was no longer a visitor in Portman Square: as, however, his friends resided in the country, she did not feel any surprise at this circumstance, till she observed that his name never by any chance escaped the lips of either his mistress or Lady Wyedale. She then began to speculate a little on the cause of his absence, and, connecting it with Rosalind's change of manner, to believe some impediment had arisen to prevent their union. She narrowly scrutinised nothing she could read there confirmed or visions. She was certainly graver than could still appear out of spirits; and her counte-

nance, though its usual gaiety seemed clouded, wore its freshest bloom. Lord Edgermond's desertion had, she knew, given her so much secret uneasiness, it was a subject to which she never alluded; but, fearless of exciting any deep emotion, even should adverse circumstances have interposed between her and Mr. Osborne, she fairly asked Rosalind what was the cause of that distance between them she had at length noticed.

"So you have found it out at last by yourself. Well, the fact is, that all is over between him and me. Come, don't extend your eyes so very wide, for I will soon relieve your curiosity. And now for the solution to the enigma. You recollect the masquerade?" Felicia's changing colour betrayed it had not escaped her memory. "At that said place I had a *rencontre* with *le désiré*—I was suddenly seized with an unlucky *accès de coquetterie*. You know I have a *tic* of playing off one lover against another; and to bring my tale to a *finale*, Osborne thought proper to feel himself offended. I had my reasons for not choosing to humble myself after my wickedness, and so it is all off—yes, quite off between us; indeed, the only marvel is, that it ever was on; for, after all, Osborne, though tolerably good-looking, wants that air which is essential to a man who aspires to move in the first circles; and his family connections, notwithstanding the broad assertions of my good old friend Mrs. Hustleton, do not quite place his blood on a par with that of the Howards, or entitle him to claim kindred with Bourbon or Nassau. But, I assure you, joking apart, even had not Edgermond suddenly changed the current of my love, it would not have flowed smoothly, for I should have felt much mortified at the little attention which was paid him by Lady Clarinda and her *coterie*. How he came to get a ticket I cannot imagine, unless it was given him on the ground of his engagement with me, for he is evidently considered a person of no importance by those who are so; and even my dearly beloved cousin, that was to have been, I firmly believe would not keep her footing among them if they did not fear her; for, though she is, in fact, nobody, she can exert that unruly member the tongue to such purpose, that those who displease her generally rue their imprudence before they are much older. The sirocco is not, in short, more dangerous to the body than her breath to the reputation of those whom she dislikes. I see, by your demure face and profound silence, you think I am greatly to blame, and yet you know, I am positive you do, that I never cared a straw for him."

"I certainly always feared you did not feel that regard for him you ought to have entertained; and if you remember, I many times indirectly endeavoured to prevail upon you not to receive the addresses of a man whom, I felt persuaded, pique, or some other motive, only impelled you to tolerate; but still having accepted his offer, I will not be so courtly as to say I do not consider you have acted ill. You should have analysed your

sentiments towards him before you allowed him to take an expensive house, and furnish it under your not less expensive taste."

"Ah! as to that, I have done him no harm there. A house he must soon have had: it is not beyond his fortune, and if I had not superintended its fitting-up, he would never have had so elegant an abode: so, on the whole, he ought rather to feel obliged to me."

"Doubtless he must feel much gratitude towards a woman who has thus trifled with his time and his affections."

"Time!—Had he been in trade, like Mrs. Hustleton, he might have had cause of complaint, and reason to consider the hours spent in dancing after me, and calculating on my possessions, in the light of a bad debt, or a rue bargain—a losing concern, a sad speculation, &c. &c.; but that can be no loss which we earnestly desire to get rid of, and to none is its load more oppressive than to a briefless barrister. Then as to his affections, in spite of self-love I must own, I really do not think they will sustain any severe injury. To be serious, I have some time believed he built hopes on Lady Wyedale's attachment to me, and the moment that idea possessed my imagination, I felt an additional unwillingness to complete the engagement into which I know not what drove me, unless it was infatuation; for assuredly a man with a despicable two thousand a year can be considered no extraordinary catch for a girl of my age, rank, and (false modesty avant) figure. Besides which, after being long unable to fathom the cause of Auntie Wyedale's daily-augmenting ill-humour, I began to think the hopes which I saw he was building, might not have so sandy a foundation as I at first imagined; and that, conscious she intended to make me her heir instead of our long-legged cousin, Jemmy Leycester, who has always been held *in terrorem* before my eyes, she thought I was forming a poor alliance; yet, determined not to avow her intention, had no means of making me perceive my folly unless by increased petulance. I therefore resolved to get rid of him as speedily as might be; and as Benedick's brushing his hat was construed into a sign of his falling in love with Beatrice, so my yawning whenever he happened to address me, and taking up a book whenever we were left alone, might have announced pretty plainly that I was falling out of love with Francis Osborne, if anybody had been observant enough to notice them."

"Really, Rosalind, you evince a policy I should have thought incompatible with your volatility of character," said Felicia, a little displeased with the cold, calculating prudence by which she, for the first time, appeared actuated.

"Speak out. I like things by their right names. You mean to say you did not think I had been such a mercenary, contriving, selfish little jilt."

"Why no, not that neither," said Felicia, smiling.

"Well, something approaching very nearly nevertheless—and

perhaps I am a little interested : once I was romantically generous, like yourself, but the world is a fine school for correcting such absurdities. I saw the taking care of number one was the grand business of life ; and if, as I shrewdly suspect, Osborne was induced to pay attentions to me merely because he thought I should be an heiress, he was not less mercenary than I am in declining to receive them, on finding I shall be one. I see you are preparing to argue the matter, and as I have no inclination to be your antagonist, we will wave the topic. I have now entirely satisfied your curiosity."

"Not entirely. I hope you have parted on tolerable terms, and that you have got back your letters."

"No, we are at daggers drawing ; my effusions still remain in his possession, and may there remain for me. Hearts and darts, loves and doves, are now quite obsolete, entirely exploded from all genteel modern epistles ; and as I never dealt much in any hyperbolical expressions of attachment, he is welcome not only to retain, but to show them to any friends who may desire to peruse a love-letter indited by the merry Miss Rosalind, as your maid, I understand, calls me. *Apropos* of Jenny ! it is fortunate for me that her eyes do not possess any of the dangerous property ascribed to those of the basilisk, or all my foolery would have been hushed long ago. And even now, did I put any faith in the power of the evil eye, I should dread to meet her, for really she looks as if she would like to transfix me to the spot on which I happen to stand."

This was a subject on which Felicia had no inclination to dilate. She was aware that Jenny felt by no means in charity with Rosalind ; and unwilling either to betray or conceal her motives, she hastily reverted again to the topic before under discussion ; and scarcely knowing what she said, asked if Rosalind would have nothing to fear from Mr. Osborne's resentment.

"No, what can he do ? I see no channel of redress for his wrongs, unless he drags me into a court of justice for a breach of promise of marriage, and from that I take it he would get little satisfaction. There is an old saw about suing a beggar, and catching something very diminutive.—Well, don't look so shocked, I am ashamed of my own vulgarity, I confess. Really, I wish I could forget a great deal of that lore I obtained during the first two or three years that I spent with Auntie Wyedale. She was a gay lady then, and I was consigned so completely to the care of domestics during the time she was engrossed by company and amusements, that I acquired a fund of servants'-hall information which I fear will stick by me for life ; for though she, at length, saw the necessity of changing my society, Madame La Friponnier had little to recommend her, save the accidental circumstance of being born abroad : she mended my manners, but my morals remained in much the same state as she found them. Indeed, it could not reasonably be expected she should instruct me on points

where she was herself ignorant; and unluckily nature has given me such a strange aptitude to remember what I had better forget, that I should be happy if some ingenious philosopher would devise something diametrically opposite to mnemonics, and teach me to consign to oblivion a large portion of the refuse which now crowds up the recesses of my mind."

"I wish it were possible, indeed," said Felicia. "And, after yourself, the first persons whom I should desire to see benefited by the invention, would be your *ci-devant* lover and his cousin; for I am much afraid this unfortunate '*accès de coquetterie*,' as you are pleased to term it, will render them your enemies for life."

"I am not without some misgivings of the same sort myself; for that he had speculated on Auntie Wyedale's green acres is a fact I am assured of, from his being on all occasions so anxious that what we did should please her ladyship. Now, as her ladyship had given her consent to our union, though with the grace of a bruin, if he had not looked beyond the possession of my fair hand, her ladyship's inclinations would never have been so much the object of his regard, I opine. 'Don't mind her,' said I one day, when, after she had been desperately cross, he was suggesting to me fifty plans for getting her into a decent temper again. 'It is a great object to us to please her, you know, dear Rosalind,' said he, with something of the Hustleton whine, and feline expression of the eye. 'Not at all,' said I; 'as she has given her consent to our marriage, she cannot withdraw it; and that is *all* we have either to expect or fear from her, you know.' I fixed my eye on his phiz as I spoke; and saw in a moment, from the dropping of his under jaw, the workings of his little, narrow, mercenary soul. He grinned horribly a ghastly smile as he assented, but it did not deceive me; I saw he was that heterodox animal, a prudent lover, and I therefore felt the less compunction at making him for a short time a pussy-cat's-paw. Yes, however mortifying to self, I must repeat, I have no idea *les intérêts du cœur* were all the interests he had in view. I do not know, however, whether this is not more to be lamented, on consideration; for the more grief he feels at the loss of the fortune, the more he will try to persuade himself and the world he laments my pretty face; and if he has half of either the abilities or inclination for mischief of his amiable relative, I may anticipate some little plaguing from him, I believe."

"I am more afraid of Mrs. Hustleton," said Felicia. "Young men don't like to descant much on such misfortunes: he will probably endeavour to prevail on himself to think that he relinquished his claim to your hand, because his self-love——"

"No, that he cannot do," interrupted Rosalind, to whom the idea of his resentment was far more gratifying than the possibility of his not fully understanding that she had dismissed him. But I am not afraid of his wrath after all, for he visits nowhere where his opinion of me could do me any real disservice; and, as to the

old gentleman, his cousin, though I dare say she could impale me alive with her own hands, she dare not be very clamorous. She is wise enough to know, that people who live in glass houses ought not to throw stones; or, if she should not be in possession of this useful piece of information, it must be my business to teach it her."

"Can you be speaking of the same person, whom, only a few months ago, I know you censured me for not uniting with you in extolling to the skies?"

"Oh, yes, the very same," said she, laughing. "Circumstances alter cases, you know. I am not, however, aware I did extol her to the skies. I might though, for I then seriously intended marrying Osborne, and was not insensible to the many pretty things I could purchase with her three per cents and five per cents. And had the engagement gone on, I should probably have continued to think of her as I then did."

"Till it ended in matrimony," said Felicia. "I fear your senses would have then returned to you."

"There you are quite mistaken. Whilst I had an eye to her fifteen or twenty thousand pounds, she would always have looked well in my sight. I would even have barricaded my ears against her 'give me leave ma'am,' and all the varied modulations of her voice, while addressing superiors and inferiors (equals she has none), from the cringing, fawning, sycophantic whine of canting hypocrisy, to the loud domineering tones of dogmatising insolence."

"Rosalind," said Felicia, with a sigh, "these are cold, worldly maxims and motives for so young a woman. I was in hopes, when you attempted to deceive me, you were under the influence of delusion yourself."

"And so I was. In the first place it was my duty and interest to think and speak well of my future relations; and in the next, that same twenty thousand in perspective did really dazzle my vision a little. To you, Felicia, who are scarcely human, this may seem very mercenary and very incredible; but be assured all other persons would have felt and acted as I then did; and, like me, would have seen clearer, when their optics were no longer confused by the shine of the gold. It is in vain to deny that money does possess a charm which invests its owner with attractions which we feel without knowing how to define or account for them; but so it is; for every day's experience demonstrates that it extends to those whose riches will never benefit us. This truth was admitted even by the greatest moralist of the age, Dr. Johnson; authority which I am sure you will not attempt to controvert; and the only thing that chafes my spirit is, when I see people absolutely prostrating themselves before the idiot of their worship, affecting to say they would pay court to no man for his riches—'what is his money to them?' &c. &c. &c. The question is answered in a moment, by first introducing them to a wealthy man, and then ushering them into the society of a poor

one. Dear, how much the periphrasis—the circumlocution—the shading—the softening in their explanations with those above them, when they sometimes venture to disagree in an opinion, contrasts with the dictatorial manner, flat contradiction, haughty supercilious insolence, or cool contemptuous indifference, which marks their arguments with the poor man. These remarks don't apply to you, dearest Philly—for, as I have told you before, you are an unique,—but to the world in general; and especially those who, secretly conscious of its power, are loudest in denying its influence, that they may deceive themselves as well as others. This class of persons also, themselves in possession of real comfort, are continually declaring that money confers no happiness; perpetually advising their less prosperous relatives and friends to be *contented*; wondering at their anxiety about worldly affairs; and taking extraordinary merit to themselves because they are so satisfied with their condition. I long to tell them the moderation, on which they pique themselves so highly, arises not from virtue or philosophy, but emanates from self-complacency, crowned by unvaried good fortune. Oh, how I abhor such cold-blooded, deceitful affectation! It is just on a par with the casuistry of Lady Wyedale, who, though she cannot stir without a carriage, dine without every delicacy of the season, or put on her own shoes, declares that she sees no hardship in servants trudging through the dirtiest streets in the most tempestuous weather—poor people living on potatoes, and earning them by the sweat of their brow. And then, if you attempt to argue the matter with her, she gives you as a reason, that they have always been accustomed to such things. Accustomed! yes, as we are accustomed to the caprice of her temper, which habit certainly renders bearable, though it is an evil which we daily feel, and ought to excite for us the compassion of those who are more fortunately situated."

Felicia was not one of those persons who esteem poverty a light burthen; for though she had never felt its pressure, she had early seen its withering influence on those who did. She knew that affluence cannot confer on the indolent and discontented a moment's happiness, or ward off the arrow of affliction; but she knew that the chilling power of penury could point the dagger of misery, and not only deprive us of those enjoyments all instinctively must desire, but rob the generous bosom of the first, greatest pleasure it is capable of tasting,—affording relief to the wretched; and she had witnessed so much of this *cheap philosophy*, since she became a denizen of the fashionable world, that she readily assented to the justice of these hasty observations. There was a something also in them that showed that, had Rosalind's mind been properly directed, she would have scorned her present habits and feelings. With renewed attachment she clasped her to her arms, and the hope that she might some day guide this interesting creature to the straight, but narrow path of virtue, shone like a star to brighten her gloomy hemisphere.

CHAP. XXII.

"She is with persevering strength endued,
And can be cheerful—for she will be good." CRABBE.

It was not before the expiration of a week after Evanmore's departure, that Felicia could summon courage to request Rosalind would formally communicate to Lady Wyedale that her engagement with Mr. Evanmore had terminated; and under circumstances which precluded the least probability of its ever being renewed. Rosalind readily complied; but suggested that, as her ladyship was just then particularly indisposed, and *par conséquence* particularly cross, it would be better to defer the information till she was more of a convalescent. Rosalind knew her aunt's peculiarities of temper so well, that Felicia unhesitatingly acquiesced in this arrangement, without, however, exactly seeing its object. She was not aware that Rosalind, apprehending Lady Wyedale would feel extremely provoked at her being thus thrown on her hands, good-naturedly wished not to reveal this supposed piece of disagreeable intelligence till, restored to something like mental tranquillity, by bodily ease, she might receive it with more complacency; and equally certain her ladyship would rejoice at her emancipation from Mr. Osborne, had reserved the change in her own situation as a sweatmeat to render the other less unpalatable. Nearly a fortnight elapsed before Rosalind judged it safe to open her budget; and after having with much circumlocution and caution, announced that Felicia was no longer the affianced wife of Evanmore, she saw with astonishment that it produced very contrary emotions in her ladyship's bosom to those she had anticipated.

Lady Wyedale, indeed, received this unlooked-for intelligence with the sincerest pleasure. She had conjectured, from Evanmore's absence, that some quarrel had arisen between them in consequence of his going to the masquerade; but knowing how ardently Felicia loved him, she had not entertained the most distant hope that it would be the occasion of a final separation. Delighted at the prospect thus again presented to her eyes of a child of Major Leycester's becoming great, she so far forgot her usual coldness of manner as to go to her room, congratulate her on having relinquished so poor a connection, express the pleasure she felt at the idea of her supplying the chasm which Rosalind's marriage would so soon make in her affections and establishment, and hint her intention of considering her for the future in a very different light from that in which she had hitherto regarded her. Felicia almost feared that this sudden and unexpected display of kindness sprang not from the amiable wish to soothe her in this bitter hour of distress, yet she felt affected by it; and, half-censuring herself for uncharitableness, as Lady Wyedale left the room tenderly took her hand, and assured her, that this act of

condescending goodness should be repaid by a life devoted to her service. Lady Wyedale understood the innuendo, and smiled; but she had no inclination just now to receive so great a reward from her hands. Her present wish was, to see her well married. Rosalind had disappointed her pride and provoked her resentment. Passion turned the balance in Felicia's favour. The memory of her gallant gifted brother was dear to her—his alliance with the Beauclercs paved the way to her own. It was whilst on a visit to him and his patrician wife, that she was introduced to Sir Thomas Wyedale. Her eldest brother, the incumbent of a small benefice, had wounded the newly-acquired dignity of both by a union with a young member of his flock more remarkable for good looks than good descent. She disliked and despised the whole family; and, despite her menacing hints regarding James Leycester, had not the smallest intention of constituting him her heir. She merely played him off as a card to keep Rosalind in order through the medium of jealousy. Full of schemes for the aggrandisement of one sister, and the punishment of the other, she returned to her own apartment, to make a considerable alteration in her will. She was busily employed in drawing up a codicil to transfer the major part of her fortune from Rosalind, whose ungrateful indifference to her many hints that she disliked her connection with Mr. Osborne, had excited her warm, though secret displeasure, when Rosalind *sans ceremonie* burst upon her, and communicated in her usual flippant way, that she was likely to have two nieces instead of one devoted to her service for life. Her astonishment was excessive, and the pleasure she would have felt only a few hours before, was overbalanced by the recollection that she had irretrievably bound herself to share the advantages of her patronage and fortune with her sister. She could not, indeed, have refused to continue her present shelter to Felicia, had she known this circumstance before, but she would have been guarded in her expressions of its future continuance, and cautiously abstained from hinting at any further kindness. Trying to smother her mixed sensations of joy and uneasiness, she asked if Mr. Osborne had really taken his final leave; and learnt that his parting bow was made on the same day that saw the dissolution of Felicia's engagement with Evanmore, namely, the morning after the masquerade. In a voice choked by passion, she demanded to know why this important change in her situation had been so long held from her, upbraided her with the vilest ingratitude; and, in the paroxysms of her indignation (reckless of what she said so that her words were but calculated to give pain), accused her of deceitfulness, coquetry, folly, and hypocrisy. Astonished and dismayed at a result so wholly unsuspected, Rosalind fled from her presence with rage, shame, and mortification. She now began to believe her ladyship had no real intention of adopting her as her heir, and that the dislike she had manifested to Mr. Osborne merely arose from the natural capricious-

ness of her temper. She did not lament that she had dismissed Osborne, for she had never liked him, but she was exasperated at the idea of having been deceived, duped; and, burning with resentment, she sought Felicia to communicate the insults she had received. Felicia was a sympathising listener, but she had ceased to feel surprise at Lady Wyedale's vacillations; and, anxious not to widen the breach between persons so circumstanced, she tried to soften Rosalind's wrath by reminding her of her ladyship's general kindness, and the obligations she was really under to her for essential benefits. Rosalind would not admit the latter, and disputed the former. "She may be attached to me, but her love is shown in such capricious forms, that one can't feel either gratitude for her affection, or certainty of its possession. Is she ever two hours in the same mind? Will not what I did yesterday without giving the smallest offence, to-day excite her sorest displeasure? Are these the proofs of love? And as to the gratitude I owe her, I esteem our obligations at present reciprocal. She gives me a home, and in return I divert her *ennui*, endure her storms, minister to her idleness. Could she do without me? No; a woman so indolent, that she is incapable of summoning exertion to issue an invitation for a party, and without spirit enough to read even a novel for herself, must ever have some one to humour her whims and indulge her laziness."

"My aunt, remember, is now becoming an old woman," said Felicia. "And remember, dearest Rosalind, that circumstance alone ought to render us lenient to her foibles."

"When she is sufficiently an old woman not to dress and behave like a young one, I may grant something to the plea of years; but while her ladyship, by every effort of her soul, disclaims all right and title to the character of age, she has no right to expect its advantages. And as to its being our place to treat her with respect, because we know she is what she, nevertheless, will not allow herself to be, I can only say that you who have been instructed to do your duty without reference to anything else, might not, perhaps, find it a difficult task, but I should; and her ladyship has no right to expect me to act from principles she never instilled into me. Well, if ever I do live to become an old woman, I hope I shall not shelter idleness under a cloak never worn but for the occasion; nor be unreasonable enough to expect young people will be so good as to grant me the privileges and honours of advanced life, while I studiously endeavour by rouge, affectation, and artifice, to hide my claims to the distinction. In this respect I admire even Mrs. Berkely. She is, to be sure, a sad long-faced Christian, and has a little the aspect of a tragedy queen: but then she is consistent; and without looking farther, I could never behave saucily to that woman. There is something so dignified in the measured decorum of her behaviour, so respectable in her flowing black silk robes and silver hair, in the calm composure with which she takes out her

spectacles, that though I knew she did not promote my cause with Berkely, and often gave me many a sly rap on the knuckles, I never dared to offer anything in the shape of a retort, when my eye caught a view of her person. Now, in my squabbles with Auntie Wyedale, the more I look at her flaming cheeks, and see the flowers and feathers on her auburn caxon, dancing with their mistress's rage, the more I always feel inclined to continue the contest with spirit."

"Let me hope you will think differently at some time, and let me congratulate you on having regained somewhat of your accustomed good humour; the term 'auntie' is never used when in a downright rage."

"Your congratulations are premature," she said, but with a smile that contradicted the assertion. "I am still in a violent passion, and a little alarmed into the bargain; for, to tell the truth, as we stood looking at each other, with eyes that did no justice to our feelings, if they announced not a desire to strike each other dead, I saw, 'codicil to my will,' written in large letters on a sheet of paper. More I could not read, for she shuffled it into the drawer of her writing desk a moment afterwards, locking the desk carefully; and, uniting this circumstance with my singular reception, I am inclined to believe she had just made up her mind to bequeath all her goods and chattels to that said cousin of ours, tall James Leycester, with whom I have been long threatened in such hints as these:—'It does not follow, because we bring people up they are to inherit our fortune—they have not so much claim as the rest of our relations, for whom we have done nothing; and at all events a small legacy is the *most* they can themselves expect;' or, 'property should always descend to the *male* heir,'—followed a few minutes afterwards, by an apparently indirect question about my uncle James's family, or a careless remark on his son James being so 'promising a young man.' Now, knowing that my poor uncle James is, what my poor grandfather Leycester was, a poor man; and that when he wanted a trifle to article this 'promising young man' to a solicitor, she refused the loan of three hundred pounds; and, moreover, that whilst this 'promising young man' was twelve months in town with a solicitor, previous to embarking for himself in the country, she kept him at arm's length, never inviting him to more than three or four formal dinners, I had no real apprehension that she would ever seriously think of making him her representative. But, on my honour, I am at present startled, and should not wonder if he, to whom she once refused the paltry sum of three hundred pounds, might one day receive from her better than three thousand a-year."

"It is too common a case, after leaving the drowning to struggle alone, to overwhelm them with assistance when they no longer require it," said Felicia. "And if Lady Wyedale would leave you a handsome legacy, and myself a small one,

I should be perfectly contented that my poor uncle's family came in for the bulk of her estates."

"So should not I," cried Rosalind. "I have derived under her roof a taste for luxuries which will make a mere competence poverty to me, and imbibed a predilection for refined society which will make all other disgusting. I would, however, willingly part with a considerable share; and when I was more secure than I am now, I often begged her to invite our four cousins, Miss Mary, Miss Rebecca, Miss Martha, and Miss Bridget, the spinster sisters of the aforesaid terrific James, to spend a winter with us, just to give the poor things a chance; but she never would. It has, indeed, always been a part of her policy not to be intimate with relations, whose necessities might be a reproach to her inhumanity, or detract from her consequence; and then, after having kept them at such an awful distance, that each party gradually ceases to remember the ties of affinity, she says, it cannot be expected she should care for people of whom she knows nothing—and there ends the acquaintance! On this subject she has, indeed, some strange notions. She acknowledges all those relatives whom it is *creditable* to acknowledge, and the rest she affects to consider no relations at all. And why, do you think? Because she is not intimate with them. Therefore, a rich cousin with whom she chooses to be acquainted, because the acquaintance will do her honour, or may be convenient, though only related in the fifth degree, is much nearer than a poor cousin german with whom she has, from motives of worldly wisdom, cut the connection. This nice, subtle distinction, I believe, owes its origin entirely to herself. Sir Isaac Heard, Garter King-at-Arms, and every member of the Herald's Office, would, I dare say, be astonished to learn that relationship does not depend on blood, but upon circumstances produced by inclination on the side of the affluent branches of a family, who may free themselves in a moment from the links and duties of consanguinity, by not owning those whom it is inconvenient or unpleasant to them to know.

"I am not given to moralising, Felicia; but since we are on the subject, surely the opening scenes of that drama in which we figure as performers have, on the whole, been rather strange, and rather melancholy, and the conclusion still involved in such obscurity that we cannot divine whether it will end in tragedy or comedy. I never saw my father to know him, and you I believe scarcely recollect his person. Our earliest years were passed with a young mother dying of a broken heart—cast off by her patrician connections for a union with a husband of whom she was so soon and so sadly deprived. Our infant voices and footsteps, when we gave way to childish glee and romping, hushed into silence, because 'poor mamma was dying, and good children must make no noise to disturb her.' Our daily visit to her bedside for a few minutes began at last to frighten me, she looked so unlike a thing of earth; the large eager eyes turned on us—the

was evidently touched, but there was no time to spare for compliments — the shabby hackney-coach was waiting. Perhaps he surmised why I had shown him so little love in my lady's presence — perhaps the tide of stagnant natural affection was set in motion by this little girlish attention, and flowed towards his young rival; whatever the cause, he laid down his old battered portmanteau on the hall floor, and taking me in his arms said, 'Thank you, my pretty maid, thank you! may God bless you, my child!' and then he gave me a hearty kiss — such a smack! sample, no doubt, of those he was wont to bestow in his skittish days on the ruddy lips and cherry cheeks of the miller's daughter, when she was a pretty maid — now sitting o' Sundays in the parson's pew stately and staid — our present much-respected aunt, — snatched up his portmanteau, and bolted into the coach. Felicia, I declare to you, tears positively started into my eyes; and I believe it was the remembrance of that old man's loving kiss that inclined me so often to beg my aunt would invite his daughters to town."

"My Rosa," said Felicia, with a smiling shake of her head, "how you do run on; but I must pardon the flippancy of the conclusion of this family history for the sake of thy gift to poor Uncle Leycester. All other answer I can make is, that while admitting Lady Wyedale is not exactly what we could wish her, principle and policy equally require that we should

"Be to her virtues very kind,
And to her failings ever blind."

I also earnestly advise you, dearest Rosalind, to make overtures of peace to her directly. I am sure she loves you, notwithstanding her occasional hastiness; and, perhaps, in defiance of tall cousin James Leycester, she may yet leave you a large portion of her wealth: at least, I hope she will."

"You really are an angel," said Rosalind, fondly patting her cheek, as her heart and her understanding acknowledged the disinterestedness and wisdom of these remarks. "Like Eve in her days of innocence, whatever you say is wisest, virtuestest, discreetest, best, and you would never have proved Adam a lover by the fallacy of his judgment, for you would not, I am sure, have touched the apple which has cost all her sons, and especially daughters, so dear."

"You evince quite as much mistaken attachment towards me by this panegyric, as our great forefather displayed when complimenting Eve," said Felicia laughing. "I am neither wisest, virtuestest, nor discreetest, and so very, very far from being best, that I feel I fall infinitely short of what I ought to be. In defiance of your frequent eulogies, I assure you the most I can claim with any degree of honesty is a desire to discharge the duties of my station, and an earnest endeavour to benefit by the great advantages I have received."

"Oh, pray, my dear Philly, don't be so unnaturally modest. You remind me of the heroine of some novel I once read, whose humility was so profound, that when stating to a friend her doubts and fears, as to whether she should be able on a reverse of fortune to obtain her own support, unconscious of her varied powers, thus diffidently recapitulates her pretensions: 'I am mistress of my own language; familiar with French and Italian; know something of Latin, German, drawing, and music; am conversant with accounts, can correct the press, write shorthand, *break sugar*, and *run errands*.' Now, had this tirade been addressed to me, I would have answered the lady with Rochefoucault's maxim, that affected simplicity is refined imposture, or with two lines of Professor Porson's:—

"For the sin of all others the Devil admires,
Is the sin of false humility."

Don't be offended, good sister; you often favour me with a little wholesome advice, and I feel as if I had not hitherto been sufficiently generous in returning the compliment. So in the hope we three, that is you, and I, and Lady Wyedale, especially dear Lady Wyedale, may mend by our exertions to improve each other, I bid you adieu till dinner, for I am going to take a walk in the park with——I dare not say whom, but your dolorous visage tells me you require no further explanation."

"Stay, dear Rosalind," cried Felicia, "I must have some conversation with you on that subject."

"Indeed you must not," was her reply. "You are there a trespasser on forbidden ground. And more than that, *vous y perdrez vos pas*." She darted through the door as she spoke, and Felicia was reluctantly compelled to postpone, once more, the explanation she was so anxious to receive from Rosalind of Lord Edgermond's conduct, in delaying to solicit her hand, while he seemed to have offered his affections.

CHAP. XXIII.

"Whoever thou art, who feelest thy mind oppressed with sorrow, thy spirits sunk, thy activity gone; if the world present no object which seems worthy of thy care, if thou view it with weariness and disgust, one remedy remains. Consider, if it be possible for thee in any way whatever to do good. This is possible in every situation. Do it without delay; exert all thy power for the happiness of others, and thou wilt find thy own."

Sermons on the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity.

FELICIA had all the feelings of the woman, but they were tempered by that equanimity which is the peculiar characteristic of a Christian: she could not, therefore, be long subject to the vehemence of tempestuous grief; and though she still believed

she should never know real happiness again, sentiments of resignation and habits of self-government were gradually diffusing a not unpleasant calm over her bosom, when she received the following letter from her friend, Mrs. Marshington :

"Had I not known that premature consolation is seldom productive but of increased anguish, I would instantly have answered your letter, to express my sincere sympathy in that distress you have so pathetically painted ; and with it my high approbation of the step from which it arises.

"I own the dejected style of your two last letters, and my knowledge of the character of each, prepared me for this termination of your views. We find few persons endowed with sufficient heroism to resist the infection of example, particularly when accompanied by beauty, wealth, and fashion ; and fewer still, in whom is united every good quality. Mr. Evanmore I knew to possess many ; but firmness and constancy, the cements of virtue, were not those by which he was most distinguished. I thought him an amiable man ; but I will candidly own, as far as I could judge, his actions seemed rather to arise from intuition than education — his opinions founded on imitation rather than reflection. I feared, therefore, he would not be proof against the blandishments to which he was exposed ; and as I felt assured you would despise that phantom of piety which teaches us to brave the feelings of our heart at a distance, while it leaves us their prey at the moment we are called up to conquer them, I am much more grieved than surprised at the dissolution of your engagement. I will not, however, dwell on the past, lest I may tear open a half-closed wound ; allow me only, my dear Felicia, to congratulate you on having had strength of principle and fortitude of mind sufficient to sacrifice all you esteem happiness at the shrine of religion. As yet, I fear you can scarcely teach your refractory heart to bear, without murmuring, this heavy deprivation ; but be not dismayed, that period will arrive, and with healing in its wings. A very trifling intercourse with the world is sufficient to show us that happiness is not always the accompaniment of virtue, because for that there is reserved a higher reward in the world to come ; and, in proportion as we are miserable here, will be the measure and glory of our felicity hereafter. Perhaps it may be one of the merciful, though inscrutable designs of Providence, that even the joys of Heaven shall be increased by a contrast with the sorrows of life ; and who, with such a brilliant hope in view, would repine to endure a short pilgrimage of affliction which should add *felicity to felicity* of eternal duration ? But for those smaller sacrifices to duty, which it sometimes falls to our lot to make, there has been graciously granted *even here* an assurance that they are acceptable to the Divine Being, and an encouragement to their performance given, in the *secret satisfaction* which always follows them. This internal peace — this heavenly tranquillity, will so surely be yours,

that I shall hasten to reply to some passages in your letter which, though probably natural to one in your situation, I hope to show you are founded in error. You say, you 'cannot again feel the slightest attachment to any man, and shall consequently never marry.' Dear Felicia, do not labour under the delusion so common to a young mind (particularly one like yours, tinctured with the romance often attendant upon a generous spirit), of supposing that none but a first attachment can render marriage happy. Every day's experience denotes the fallacy of this popular error; and even demonstrates, that those whom unpropitious circumstances have withheld from entering into that engagement during the age of fancy, are often happier than they who were united to the object of their earliest tenderness. Disappointment has then chastised the exuberance of youthful expectation, and knowledge of human nature prepared each to bear with the failings of the other. If you doubt this, fix your attention on the marriages which have decided, for ever, the destiny of our two acquaintance, Mrs. Lorimer and Mrs. Danvers. They were, in every sense of the word, love matches; for the one, you know, was contracted at Gretna Green, and the other, though sanctioned by the approbation of every friend they severally possessed, was entered into with equal ardour. In Mrs. Lorimer's case there was every thing to protect the passion which had sprung up in her bosom, and every thing to embellish it—fortune, lovely children, and the approval of friends. Yet neither, you are aware, is now esteemed superlatively rich in domestic love or peace. It is not necessary to point out the cause of dissension—the fact that it exists is sufficient for my theory.

"On this subject I have, indeed, a right to speak with peculiar confidence; for I speak from experience. You know, generally, that Mr. Marshington was not the object of my first choice; but your youth prevented me from ever revealing how long and how fondly I once loved another. To the gratification of this attachment nothing was wanting but the concurrence of his father—it could never be obtained—and for years we mutually mourned his obduracy. Equally forbidden by pride and principle from entering a family that would have spurned me, I then tried to conquer a passion which promised to undermine my health, and destroy those purposes of usefulness for which we were both created. The effort was painful—but the struggle was not long—the sorrow was not remediless. Mr. Marshington's addresses were enforced by the wishes of my family. I had then seen it is not necessary to adore the being with whom we form such an engagement, and learnt (what, a few years before, I should have believed impossible) that a good understanding and a good heart are almost as sure to create affection as they are certain to command esteem. I became his—new duties—new scenes—new joys—new views engrossed my attention and heart; and though, even now, I regard, with respect, him who first possessed my

affections, I seldom pass a day without a feeling of gratitude that our attachment was dissolved. This, I trust, will be your case; but should it not, you may still experience the most refined and solid pleasures. I by no means consider marriage absolutely essential to happiness—especially your happiness; for you, I firmly believe, have a mind too independent and too pious to be at the mercy of extrinsic circumstances for your portion of earthly felicity. Yes, my dear Felicia, whatever you may now think, I flatter myself your happiness is not so entirely in the power of another as you at present imagine; for happiness (real happiness, not that spurious evanescent enjoyment too often mistaken for this heavenly blessing) depends more on temper than on fortune. Persevere, cling to the principles in which you were nurtured, and be not apprehensive for the future;—nor think it is so long since I was in your situation, that I can be no judge of your sensations. Every feeling of my heart at that period is now before me, and it seems but a moment since my aching lips and faltering tongue refused to articulate the farewell I wished yet dreaded to pronounce. While, however, true piety throws a balm over the acutest sufferings, you must carefully perform all those minor duties and embrace all those lesser pleasures, which are necessary to re-establish your peace of mind, or your sacrifice will be robbed of its lustre, and your resignation of its power to heal. We can all, at times, make great efforts, and are often gifted by nature with noble impulses; but few are capable of following with unceasing energy and undeviating fortitude the narrow path of self-denial; few, of steadily pursuing the sometimes irksome steps of duty, till habit shall have strewn the rugged road with never-dying flowers.

“We are told that ‘*l’inutilité de la vie des femmes est la première source de leurs désordres*,’ and I fear the reproach is not wholly without truth. To this error we are probably particularly prone when under the influence of sorrow; and though I know your natural energy of mind and superior education may place you in great measure above this temptation, I earnestly entreat you to be, more than ever, zealous to employ every hour of your time—more than ever solicitous to discharge with the minutest fidelity every little duty. You have a strong taste for reading; and though no advocate for what is termed learning in women, I think where abilities are bestowed, the gift was not intended to be thrown away as valueless; and when the pursuit of knowledge is not permitted to interfere with the avocations of our sex, I am of opinion, that a literary turn may be safely and wisely encouraged, because it renders us independent of amusement from others. But that to which I would chiefly direct your attention, is charity. I know you are innately generous and compassionate. I am, therefore, only anxious to guard you against that supineness which personal disappointment is apt to produce, even in a heart like yours. You may probably also conceive that, in your

present situation, you have no opportunity of exercising that active benevolence to which, in any other, you would gladly fly as to a refuge from your corroding reflections; and your want of ability to confer happiness on many, may suggest itself as a plea for discontinuing those exertions you were accustomed to make at Leominster. But let us not deceive ourselves by fancying, if our power were more extended we would then cheerfully exert ourselves, while we neglect the present opportunity. Every station brings with it corresponding obligations; and he alone, who steadily performs those which now claim his attention, has any right to imagine that he would discharge others of more importance. Remember, the widow's mite was acceptable even as the gifts of the wealthy; and that the cup of cold water, given from a right motive, will not pass unrewarded. It is a mistake to suppose that *riches* are essential to *charity*, though he who possesses them may lay up for himself the proudest treasures—for the hand of assistance—the voice of consolation—the smile of patronage—are all equally members of the same blessed family. Lose not, therefore, my dearest friend, in the languor of unavailing regret, those talents with which you have been gifted, and happiness—yes, even happiness, will crown your exertions.

“There is one other trial, to which I fear you are peculiarly liable, that I have omitted to warn you against—it is, the being too much depressed by the evident contempt in which your sentiments are held, and the dislike they may perhaps ensure you. You must remember we are told by one, unrivalled in his deep knowledge of the human heart, that ‘our good qualities, more than our bad actions, expose us to persecution and hatred;’ and that ‘bad as men are, they dare not appear to be open enemies to virtue: when, therefore, virtue is persecuted, it is represented as counterfeit, or some crime is laid to its charge.’ Those, then, who have a sincere desire after virtue must seek it in its own paths, not in those of the world; and whatever uneasiness or inconvenience may generally arise from diverging from the beaten track, in this instance be assured it will be amply repaid. For oh, Felicia, what comparison is there between the approval of conscience and the applause of mankind?—And oh, what a glorious light will break in upon the darkness of expiring nature, when at its close we perceive we have no crime to deplore—no glaring error to lament! With what calmness will a soul so supported prepare for that change so terrific to the guilty! Support, therefore, dear Felicia, the sneers or aversion of those around you with patience and equanimity—be insensible to their injustice—alive only to the possibility of deserving it.

“I trust it is unnecessary to say, that Mr. Marshington and myself would rejoice to see you, if you could visit us this spring. You know we are always home birds, therefore come whenever

you can prevail on Lady Wyedale to part with you, and believe me you will be received with both pride and pleasure by

“Your sincere and affectionate friend,

“ANNE MARSHINGTON.”

Felicia's understanding assented to the truth of Mrs. Marshington's arguments; but her heart was still too sincerely in Evanmore's possession to admit the possibility of her ever loving any other. She derived, indeed, a melancholy pleasure in thinking that her remaining unmarried would prove how dearly she had loved him; and tend to exalt those principles which had impelled her to such a sacrifice. It was now the favourite wish of her heart that, though lost to each other in this world, they might meet again in a better—be there united by holier hands:—her unceasing prayer, that his spirit might be enlightened, and his mind purified from the contagion it had imbibed in the society of her family. But while she revolted, with almost disgust, from the idea of ever calling another, husband, she resolved implicitly to obey Mrs. Marshington's advice on all other points, and by increased diligence and virtue to adorn the profession she had publicly chosen. Her desire of active employment was soon gratified; for Rosalind, at an assembly where she appeared in a state of almost *audité*, caught a severe cold, and was confined to her apartment nearly a fortnight. Next to her anxiety for Evanmore's restoration to the path he had quitted, ranked her solicitude for Rosalind's recovery; and though assured that her indisposition was slight, she could not be prevailed upon to leave her room. Rosalind now comprised her all of earthly happiness; and the more she became assured that Rosalind's faults were only those of education, the more she felt induced to love and pity her.

Rosalind usually received her affectionate attentions with many demonstrations of reciprocal regard; but unaccustomed to illness or confinement, she was so impatient, that her petulant complainings sometimes bordered on those of Lady Wyedale, when in similar circumstances; and Felicia, with a sigh, perceived, that the gay spirits whose hilarity throws an additional brightness over the hour of festive enjoyment, are not the best calculated to bear up against adversity, or to enliven, by their fortitude under suffering, the gloom of a sick chamber.

“You need not be afraid of speaking in your own voice, it is never a very loud one,” said she one morning, when Felicia in the softest accents was asking how she felt. “Nor yet to walk on the whole of your foot. Oh! that tip-toe silence, that caution in shutting a door, is intolerable to those who are not used to it, and reminds one so of a time one naturally dreads to think of.”

“Do not dread to think of it—it must come, and its approach is neither accelerated nor embittered by those means which will divest its arrival of terror or surprise. Dearest Rosalind, embrace the present season of retirement to look into your heart.

We cannot elude death, and we must not refuse religion, for death is not more sure than judgment—or judgment than reward or punishment from Him who has said, he will *render unto every one according to his works.*”

Rosalind yawned in lieu of replying: she was too fully assured all who thought on such subjects must be Methodists, to pay the smallest attention to this advice, and too sensible of Felicia’s kindness of intention to say what would give her pain. A long silence followed; and while Felicia was indulging a secret hope that what she had said might have awakened her sister’s conscience, she was occupied in contriving, in imagination, an elegant carriage costume for her first airing.

“When do you imagine I shall be well enough to go out?” she asked, after she thought she had allowed a decent time to elapse between Felicia’s remark and her own question. “How I shall rejoice to hear the thunders of—”

“Your dear five hundred friends,” said Felicia, “whose society you sigh to exchange for mine.”

“No, not exactly that; though I own I long to take wing and fly out of this horrid room; which will give even me the blue devils, if I remain in it much longer. I suppose, however, I must submit to my fate.”

“Acquiesce, dearest Rosalind. The one is involuntary, the other a virtue.”

“These are delicate distinctions, which my dull senses will not enable me to see,” said Rosalind, “and——”

The dialogue was here interrupted by the entrance of Jenny, who stole into the room to request that Felicia would permit her to spend the evening with some distant relations, whose humble residence she had at length made out, after an investigation that did equal honour to her heart and perseverance. Felicia readily complied; and she was softly leaving the apartment, when Rosalind said, “Oh, dear! I always forgot to ask you, Jenny, what became of that poor creature who lived near your cousins. She was very ill, you know.”

“She died, miss,” said Jenny, with a half-toss of her head, unluckily remembering at the moment, that if Felicia had been equally inattentive to her tale, the unhappy woman might have perished from mere poverty.

Rosalind was not, like Felicia, “alive to every want and every woe;” but she was not naturally either unfeeling or selfish. Hers was that induration of the heart, which is often caused by seeing nothing but unbounded affluence—by never having a real personal want ungratified. “Dead!” she repeated in a tone of surprise and pity; “dear, I am sorry I never thought of her before. I remember my finances were in a deplorable condition at the time, or I would then have assisted her; and, had I only recollected her again, I would have contributed something to her aid. But, Felicia, you did not forget her, I am sure? You are so

compassionate, you never lose sight of misery till you have tried to relieve it."

"No, ma'am," said Jenny, her resentment appeased by the concern that Rosalind's face really expressed, and this compliment to her mistress; "and 'twas well Miss Felicia did not, for if she had, she must have been clammed to death."

"Starved!" said Felicia, in an under voice to Rosalind.

"Heavens!" cried Rosalind, who now, herself on the bed of sickness, had leisure to contemplate the sufferings of others. "How very dreadful! Why, how could it be? the parish, you know, were bound to support her. Why did not the people round her go to the parish officers for relief?"

"They did," said Jenny, "but dear heart a day, three or four shillings a week will not provide a poor body with a house over their heads as the saying is, and vittals, and doctors' stuff, and tendance o' other poor bodies, who often cannot afford to give even their time away, and firing, and candles, and washing, and every manner of thing besides: so when they have no friends but the parish, though they should be very thankful for that, poor souls, poor folks is sadly off when it pleases God Almighty to bring them to sickness."

Rosalind's heart smote her with a pang before unfelt. Nature had originally inclined her to all the softer feelings of humanity, but they had found no abiding place in the bosom of a fine lady, and had long been dismissed as intrusive unnecessary visitants. This simple picture, however, of the sorrows and hardships of millions of her fellow-creatures, revived sensations dormant, not wholly extinguished; and the clouded brow, the pensive face, showed her pity and self-contrition.

"Poor dear soul! she must have died out, and out, and out weeks before, if it had not been for Miss Felicia," continued Jenny, "with such a terrible visitation."

"What was the matter with her?" said Rosalind, for the first time really interested by a tale of vulgar distress.

"I don't know for sartain. At first it was the rheumatics, then the decline, then one thing, and then another, and last, poor soul, it turned out she had a wolf in her inside."

"A what?" said Rosalind, half raising herself from the sofa on which she was reclining.

"A wolf!" repeated Jenny.

"Did you say a wolf—a right down wolf?"

"Yes, miss," replied Jenny, who had lingered that she might have the opportunity of telling the marvellous tale, "'twas a sad visitation. A sad visitation," she repeated, proud of her correct pronunciation of so long a word. "A sad visitation."

"Visitation, indeed!" cried Rosalind, trying to hide with her shawl the merriment that, in spite of her former regret, now convulsed her features.

"The poor creature, a few weeks previous to her dissolution,

was seized with an enormous appetite," said Felicia, who had before heard the wondrous narrative, repressing a smile that she might not offend the compassionate Jenny; "it is a symptom that is often the precursor of death."

"As sure as you are alive, ma'am, 'twas, as Miss Rosalind said, a right down wolf," said Jenny, eagerly. "Why, she did eat, and eat, and eat, and eat, but her victuals did her no good, as well they might not."

"Really, Jenny," said Rosalind, again raising herself, and fixing her eyes on her face with a look of the deepest surprise and profoundest gravity, "this is a strange story. Are you sure—quite sure? I never heard of such a complaint before."

Jenny eyed her face before she replied. Its expression was exactly in unison with her own when she first listened to the same account, and without a suspicion of treachery, she exclaimed, "True as I am standing here. Her ravening stomach could no ways else be accounted for: besides, she said herself she must have one; and after she was fairly dead, the neighbours all watched by her through the night to see it come out of her, as no doubt it did somehow. To be sure, they saw nothing; but that was no proof it was not so neither."

"None, certainly," said Rosalind. "Felicia," she cried, turning to her sister, "I remember very well it was about the same time my beloved little Dash was seized with that violent desire of food, which gets him, you know, into such terrible scrapes with the cook. Depend upon it, the wolf, when it left the old woman, took up its quarters with him. Poor dear Dashy! I little thought what a visitation had befallen him."

Jenny changed colour; and, almost forgetful of her situation, in her rage at this insidious take-in, turned upon her light-hearted betrayer a look of the bitterest indignation. "So, so, Miss Rosalind," she cried, in stifled tones; "I know now what you are after. I'm aware of your gibes, miss"—she flung towards the door.

"Don't be angry, Jenny," said Rosalind, the couch shaking under her; "uncontrollable laughter is my complaint. The wolf shall not escape again; he shall not torment anything else, brute or Christian. The moment poor Dashy grows sick, I'll send him to Surgeons' Hall, and after they have done with him, the wolf and he shall figure together in the British Museum."*

Jenny rushed out of the room. To anything in the shape of a jest she had an insurmountable antipathy; and she could hardly forgive herself for not having had sagacity enough to see through the artful veil of gravity which Rosalind had assumed to make herself and her tale still more absurd. She flew to her room, and there sat burning with resentment, while Felicia, when

* This *true* instance of almost incredible superstition and ignorance is introduced for the purpose of showing how much it is necessary to enlighten the lower orders of society.

Rosalind's immoderate bursts of laughter gave a possibility of being heard, remonstrated with her on the impropriety of which she had been guilty, in beguiling a simple woman to make herself ridiculous and forgetful of her station.

"Oh, I forgive her the angry look she bestowed upon me; and as she took her revenge, I hope she will pardon me in turn. So, pray, my dear Felicia, unbend your Mentorean brow, and laugh with me at this astonishing instance of superstition and ignorance. Who could have believed it possible that, in the nineteenth century, a woman of eight or nine-and-twenty, rather superior to the common class of servants in intellect, if not in manners, could have credited so wild a fiction? — in this enlightened age? — a woman, too, brought up by my aunt Beauclerc, who patronised, I hear, every dame's school within twenty miles of her; and thought it her duty to instruct her servants personally! Well, my dear, I think it must a little diminish your faith in the efficacy of education."

"No, not at all," said Felicia; "for Jenny is an excellent woman, but no specimen of the new system. She was educated according to the strictest rules of the old school; and, as she did not come to us till she was fourteen or fifteen, although my aunt's admonitions strengthened her good principles, her early prejudices continued proof against every effort to dislodge them. It was in vain my aunt tried to reason her out of her fear of ghosts (barghests, as she calls them), and all their long catalogue of attendant horrors, or to weaken her faith in the lesser chain of improbabilities, by which the greater are held together — as omens, dreams, death-watches, screech-owls, and ravens. She learnt to suppress her belief in their existence, but never subdued it. Her opinions had been formed in the plastic season of infancy; and riveted, as she advanced in life, by seeing all her relations cherish the same. She is the very child of superstition; and sometimes I have taken my work, in a long winter's evening, into her room, and gradually led the conversation to her favourite topics; for, though before she has got well into the narrative strain on such occasions, she generally shakes at every trivial noise, and scarcely dares, like the little boy in the Spectator, to look over her shoulder, she is never happier than when so employed. In addition to these subjects, she is also in possession of much curious information relative to the almost obsolete customs which formerly prevailed in the north of England; and, though she would be highly offended if she thought you supposed she gave credit to these idle traditions, yet, I have observed, she never fails to detail, with peculiar solemnity and precision, that it has always been said in their family, that some great-aunt or grandmother, I forget which, on her father's side, once fasted the *live-long* day, on Saint Agnes's fast, and at night was rewarded by the saint for her abstinence with the visible appearance of her future husband."

"Ring the bell, Phill! — quick! quick! Make her come and

initiate me instantler into these mysteries—the last will more especially entertain and enlighten me.”

“Not if I am a physiognomist, and any inference may be drawn of the state of her feelings by the clapping of the door behind her when she went out, would you derive either from her immediate return to us. I question much, were I to insist upon her communicating her legendary lore, whether she is just now in a frame of mind to render her details very humorous or entertaining, even to you, Rosalind; and the fear of your ridicule would, I am sure, prevent her from giving any dramatic effect to her ghost stories. Besides, I am sure you could not keep your countenance, and it would be cruel to insult her any further. You must remember also, Jenny has some great names to support her in these early prejudices. I am, indeed, disposed to think that an instinctive belief in the existence of supernatural beings is implanted in every bosom; and, as the strongest proof of it, we have only to recollect that men of the most exemplary piety, and of hardened infidelity, have been equally under the influence of superstition. That great and good man, Dr. Johnson, evidences, in his ‘*Rasselas*,’ a secret preponderance in favour of this idea. Hobbes, the free-thinker, it is well known, firmly believed in the appearance of ghosts. Cardinals Richelieu and Mazarin were so absurdly superstitious as to employ and pension a pretender to astrology, who actually calculated their natiivities; and even Sir Isaac Newton gave implicit credence to dreams of judicial astrology. A splendid author of the present day has given his indirect testimony in favour of this subject, in the exquisite novels of Waverley and Guy Mannering. It appears, therefore, a natural defect; and I own I esteem a mind intimidated neither by the vain fears of the ignorant, nor by the presumptuous arrogance of the learned, as the best poised—the least likely to err. And really, Rosalind, I confess myself—but I see you are prepared to laugh at and despise me—I cannot be so severe on this weakness in others, because I am—yes, I unquestionably am, to a certain degree, a proselyte. These legends seem to unite us yet more firmly to that distant country which is the goal of our hopes and labours here; to connect us with those supernatural beings who must one day be our only companions; and I think it is one of the great links fastened on the mind by the singular beauties of Ossian that we are, while reading it, surrounded by spirits, and in the land of the wildest superstition.”

“I never was delighted with Ossian,” said Rosalind; “and I believe you have now unwittingly assigned the reason. I do not desire to exchange the parks for Elysian fields; nor have any ambition to make acquaintance with spirits till old Charon ferries me over the Styx at (I hope) his very latest convenience.”

Felicia turned from her in grief. She had just been pleased by the feeling she had evinced while listening to Jenny’s tale; and the disappointment she experienced on hearing so flippant a

remark, pained her yet more sensibly than it would have done at any other time. She perceived that such bursts of sympathy, or those occasional manifestations on which she delighted to build her hopes of future goodness, appeared rather impromptus than the result of better principles; and, while she contemplated the lovely form of Rosalind, as she lay stretched on the sofa, the symmetry of her finely-proportioned limbs, displayed by her loose morning robe, and her beautiful features rendered more interesting by the faded hue of temporary indisposition, tears almost gushed from her eyes at the recollection, how little the mind corresponded with the captivating person.

CHAP. XXIV.

"There is a Winter in my soul,
The Winter of despair!
Oh, when shall Spring its rage repress,
When shall the snowdrop blossom there?"

THERE is a restlessness in grief, that impels the mourner to hope that every change of situation and pursuit may relieve the mind from the weight of misery; and Felicia, though she had now returned, with something like her pristine pleasure, to the occupations in which she used to take so much delight, still felt a load at her heart, which she hoped a change of scene might, in some degree, remove.

Spring had commenced; but, for the first time, she saw its opening beauties with no pleasure. The crocus and the hyacinth at the windows of the balcony, and the feeble notes of a captive lark at the corner of the square, who now and then trilled a melancholy broken cadence, as the sun shed a few sickly beams through the bars of his prison, recalled the dear amusements of her youth—reminded her yet more forcibly of the heavy misfortunes which had since shed their gloomy influence over her mind. Her heart was then responsive only to happiness, alive only to the voice of joy—of love. The untried world was before her, glittering in all the colours of the rainbow, and she looked forwards without apprehension to the future. Alas! how had the sad realities of life darkened the bright, but illusive vision! Scarcely had a summer's sun passed away, yet the grave had closed over her she then regarded as all but a parent; and she was separated for ever from him she then esteemed all but a husband. The two great links by which man is united to his fellow-mortals were snapped, and could never be, to her, supplied by any other. She wept as these mournful images presented themselves to her imagination, and again she turned with longing eyes towards the period of their departure to the Lodge. Maria

Berkely had paid the debt of nature; the family were now recovering from the shock, and she anxiously wished to offer her personal tribute of esteem to the departed, her meed of sympathy to the living.

But Lady Wyedale was in no hurry to leave town. Rosalind and herself had patched up a peace soon after the *fracas* that followed the avowal of Rosalind's rupture with Mr. Osborne; and, having reasoned herself into a conviction that she had really offered nothing more to Felicia than a home, and, perhaps, a trifling remembrance at her death, her ladyship began to consider Rosalind with renewed interest: affection would be an improper term for feelings that owed their origin to pride, and their continuance to vanity. Again she saw, in her, the future possessor of rank, wealth, and consequence; and again, Felicia became a mere cypher in that house which she had once almost promised should be hers. But this change gave Felicia no uneasiness. She rather, indeed, rejoiced that it permitted her to spend more time in the privacy of her apartments.

The high tone of mind which Felicia acquired in retirement, and confirmed by reflection, had never, till she came to London, been exposed to the ridicule of those who could not appreciate her motives, or enter into her feelings: for Mrs. Beaucherc was uniformly consistent; and when she gave her young niece the principles and views of a Christian, she carefully guarded her from the society of those whose opinions might weaken her faith and lower her standard of morality. It was consequently one of the severest trials to which she was subject, that under Lady Wyedale's roof those sentiments were the object of laughter, surprise, or dislike; and she panted to mix once more with persons whose congeniality of ideas might enable her to enjoy again that freedom of conversation, that pleasing interchange of opinions, from which she was debarred. She was sensible that many among Lady Wyedale's acquaintance were not more distinguished for rank than virtue, but they were mere acquaintance, who preserved that polite but distant courtesy of manner which seemed to say, they wished not a closer intimacy; and timid and delicate, it was repugnant to her feelings to solicit for that personal intercourse which was denied to the rest of the family. It is seldom that what we anxiously wish, we do not endeavour to accomplish, if within those limits which the prudent and good never overstep; and after spending some weeks longer in a dreary exchange of cold civilities with Lady Wyedale, Felicia took advantage of her ladyship's convalescent state, to hint her wish to visit her friend, Mrs. Marshington. Lady Wyedale gave her immediate consent, for the late revolution in her sentiments respecting Rosalind, rendered her not averse to Felicia's occasionally having some other residence; and Felicia, elated at the prospect of rejoining her friend, wrote to say, she should leave town in a week from the date of her letter. Assured

from Mrs. Marshington's tranquil retired habits, that she had no cause to apprehend she might be from home, she immediately began to make preparations for her journey, and on the eve of their completion, had the mortification of learning, in a few hurried lines, from Mr. Marshington, that her friend was confined to her room by a fever, caught in attending upon one of her children. Mr. Marshington lamented extremely that they were necessarily obliged to defer the pleasure of her visit, but expressed his hopes, that, as Mrs. Marshington was declared out of danger, she might, without risk to herself, join them in a few weeks.

To Felicia this was a severe disappointment; for, in addition to the uneasiness she felt on her friend's account, she had anticipated so much pleasure from a temporary removal, that tears of chagrin stood in her eyes as she laid the letter on the table, and announced the impediment which had arisen to delay her excursion.

"'Tis the more unlucky," said Rosalind, "as Lady Wyedale has just determined not to visit the Lodge again this summer. You will not, therefore, have even the chance of seeing the Berkelys, unless you feel inclined to make a bold push—I don't mean for a husband—far be it from me to be so slanderous, but to visit Mrs. Berkely instead of Mrs. Marshington."

"If I had the smallest hope of success, I should not hesitate," said Felicia, in an eager voice.

"Well, then, leave the matter to me, and by a little judicious management, I will undertake to bring the higher powers into acquiescence. We are just now on very amicable terms; and I think I can, with a small portion of dexterity, and a large share of flattery, contrive to cajole the old lady into consent. Old lady! Mercy on me! Tell it not in Gath. Ye very doors and windows be mute: bear not record of my imprudence: not even my subtlety or consummate contrivance in bending facts to agree with theories, would be able to remove her exasperation did she know it was possible any body could call her—I dare not say what." She left the room as she spoke, with an air of mock affright, and, after half an hour's conversation with Lady Wyedale, returned to convey the pleasing information that her ladyship gave Felicia permission to spend a month or two at Elm Grove.

"How did you bring this about?" said Felicia.

"Why, it required a good deal of finesse, and, after all, not to be disingenuous, I verily believe she had reasons of her own for acceding to the petition, unknown to me, for she suddenly sounded a retreat from the field of action, and capitulated at the moment I thought she had been collecting her forces to renew the combat. Her motive I am unable to divine, nor is it of any importance that I should: I may have my suspicions, but I am not obliged to hint them. She has a long head of her own, one of the

strongest proofs of which is, that, after living a life with Sir Thomas Wyedale, that is without its parallel in the annals of connubial bliss, she finally prevailed upon him to leave her above three thousand pounds a year at her own disposal, besides her jointure. I, who love to investigate things to their foundation, from that laudable desire of knowledge, that philosophic spirit of inquiry which ought to actuate every rational being, could never account for this, after all the labour and trouble I bestowed on the subject, but by supposing she held a pistol to the poor man's head, as we are told the famous Duchess of Kingston did, and so achieved the point, by putting him in bodily fear. And yet I should have imagined the many battles he had lived through might have given him courage to brave the attack; or, or least, that the certainty it would, at all events, free him from her, might not have operated to render the result of his obstinacy less disagreeable. Really, Felicia, her treatment of that luckless man I can testify (for he lived two or three years after my introduction) was scandalous; in moral atrocity—the atrocity of effect, if not intent—ying with any of the legends of the Newgate Calendar. She put no knife to his throat, nor arsenic in his food, but her temper poisoned every meal he ate, and did for him bodily, through the medium of the mind, as completely as if she had.

"Though he had given her rank, consequence, power, and affluence, she seldom vouchsafed him in return a single smile. Weary of her storms or sullen looks, he scarcely dared to ask a friend to his own table without her consent, and at length relinquished everything but the empty title of master of his own house, that he might secure to himself a little peace in his own library. So little, indeed, was she sensible of her obligations, that when he once reproached her with ingratitude, in the intoxication of puffed-up pride she told him she did not esteem herself his debtor, he had not married her to gratify her inclinations, but his own; and, elated with the adulation which she received *as his wife*, was vain enough to imagine it would have been offered to the shrine of her charms, had she remained in her father's parsonage. Well, whatever other faults I may possess, I hope I shall never be base enough to treat with contumely and neglect the man whose disinterested attachment has induced him to share his more exalted views with me—or infatuated enough to ascribe to my attractions, attentions which are paid not to them, but to my husband's rank and affluence."

"Let me hope you will carry your virtue still higher," said Felicia (with one of those quiet smiles that occasionally betrayed an insight into motives almost as penetrating as Rosalind's own), suspecting that Lord Edgermond's coronet might be found at the bottom of this burst of generous indignation,—let me hope Rosalind that, even should your husband possess neither superior importance nor a larger fortune than yourself, the recollection that

he is your husband, and that you have solemnly bound yourself to love, honour, and obey him, will impel you to treat him with equal regard and respect."

"In the first place, I don't think I run any risk of marrying for love, for I was never sentimental enough to wish to exchange the Serpentine river for purling streams, or St. James's Park for myrtle groves; nor at any period of my life have I ever aspired to the sylvan honours and rural comforts of a residence in a cottage. Although built in a thicket of roses, with eglantine and jessamine blocking up every gothic casement, to the utter exclusion of the broad face of cheerful Phœbus, it would have had no charms for me. In the next, if I should be guilty of such horrid infatuation, the little blind villain who has led me into the snare will enable me to bear its inconveniences."

"That is by no means certain," said Felicia. "If it were, we should not see so many love-matches, as they are called, by which is commonly meant hasty, imprudent connections, turn out so unhappily. And even where young persons at the commencement are sincerely attached to each other, there must be something more than personal regard to render their attachment lasting. Love, we are told by one of the most distinguished characters of the age, is only one of many passions, and has no great influence upon the sum of life.* Is it, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that when it is unaccompanied by esteem and confidence, and unsupported by novelty, it will lose a part of its power? And even should it be thus attended, it may still be exposed to trials, and in the hour of temptation virtuous principles are the only real security for its continuance. We must know and feel, that it is our duty cheerfully to submit to the ills of this chequered scene, or their bitterness will impregnate even the cup of domestic happiness. We must be *determined* to lighten each other's load from a sense of obligation, or it will be too galling to be borne by love singly."

"'Pon my word, you have favoured me with a fine disquisition on the nature of the tender passion," said Rosalind, yawning; and whenever I feel myself in the least danger of committing such a *bêtise* as falling in love with a poor man, I'll consider the case with more attention."

"The major part of what I have advanced will be equally applicable should you marry a rich one. And, as we are now on the eve of separating for some time, there is another subject on which I wish to say a few words."

"Not one," cried Rosalind, "as you value my love. On that topic even you must be silent. I will not be dictated to on points of which I only can be the judge."

"I love you too dearly, and I desire your welfare too earnestly, to let even the fear of incurring your temporary displeasure, and

* Cœlebs.

temporary I am sure it will be, deter me from candidly stating my apprehensions, that Lord Edgermond is not so much attached to you as to intend making you his wife. I may be mistaken, but his attentions appear to me to be of that vague, indefinite, cautious kind, which from their being easily eluded, men of the world commonly employ in their intercourse with those who possess their admiration, rather than their love. Permit me, then, to entreat you by all you hold most dear, not to allow either your affections to be irrevocably engaged, or your unsullied honour tarnished by imprudently receiving clandestine attentions, which must be grating to your pride, however gratifying to your heart. Dearest, dearest Rosalind, forgive the anxiety of a sister who has now none to love but—you; and tell me fairly, can he who is free to marry, and yet delays to offer his hand, be sincerely under the influence of genuine affection? Can Lord Edgermond have any really cogent reasons for not openly avowing his attachment, if he feels any towards you; or for that distance and reserve, with which he invariably treats you when in the presence of his family?"

"Assured as I am these inquiries proceed from affection, unpolluted by a grain of Hustleton curiosity, I will then answer them so far as to say, that I have reason to believe he is unwilling to declare himself till Lady Charlotte Edgermond is married."

"And why?" asked Felicia.

"Why—why—really you are very inquisitive; and that infidel face of yours gives one little encouragement to proceed. Why, because the fact is, that the Marquis of Wilborton is desirous he should marry her."

"Then, my dearest Rosalind, pause. If by any little coquetry, you entangle his affections, and your own without——"

"Catching him, I shall be grievously disappointed. That was what you were going to say, I presume?"

"No, indeed, I was on the eve of observing, that you might, by indulging the pleasure he receives from flirting with a beautiful girl, and the gratification you derive from his attentions, endanger, if not destroy, the peace of mind of both, without, too, the smallest prospect of being ever united. For under these circumstances, his family will naturally oppose your wishes; and I hope, I believe, my Rosalind has too much good sense, too much proper pride, and too much honour to enter any family that would disdain her."

"Lord Edgermond has no near relations," said Rosalind, haughtily; "and I have already told you, that he is waiting till this cousin of his shall grow weary of his tardiness, and herself break the engagement."

"I cannot think highly of a man who could act so disingenuous a part as first to provoke a woman to relinquish her claims to his hand, and then meanly shelter himself under the plea of not having

been the first to dissolve a connection into which he once voluntarily entered."

Rosalind coloured; and Felicia, sensible that unpleasant arguments, too strongly enforced, are rather apt to make an enemy than a proselyte, finished the subject by gently laying her hand on Rosalind's lily arm, as it carelessly rested on her harp, repeating in a low but affectionate voice, "Dearest Rosalind, I will say no more than that I trust you will take care he proves not one of those who —

" ' Palter with us in a double sense,
That keep the word of promise to our ear,
And break it to our hope.' "

"Ergo, that he make not a fool of me!" said Rosalind.

A pause of some moments followed. Rosalind then turned her harp, and swept her snowy fingers over its glittering chords: but she was evidently not at ease, and Felicia, unwilling to interrupt the chain of her ideas, preserved silence till she seized a French air, and began warbling it in a strain of unaffected hilarity, that evinced she had succeeded in banishing her chagrin, at least for the present.

"Though the readiness with which you seem to forget my admonitions is a little discouraging," said Felicia, leaning over her as she smilingly spoke, "I cannot leave you without breathing a few more words of entreaty, rather than remonstrance."

"What! have you not emptied your budget of conjectural evils yet? Come then, exonerate your conscience at once. I know you will be ten times more dolorous, if I refuse you the opportunity. So now for the peroration of your speech, that you may go in peace to Elm Grove."

"Then I venture to hope you will in future refrain from publishing your, seldom very flattering, criticisms on your friends. I heard you the other night say of a lady, certainly not in the first bloom of womanhood, yet sprightly and pretty, in answer to a question about her, that 'she was one of the numerous family of "*Have-beens*," all of whom would be better in their beds, poor things! than moping about in ball rooms:' and after drawing such a portrait of Miss Lucretia Beaumont, for the benefit of a young gentleman that he was half convulsed with laughter, you gravely recommended him to conceal his merriment, because she had the pen of a ready writer, though she was not fairer than the children of men, and, if offended, would not scruple to bring him head and shoulders into that exquisite *morceau*, her daily journal, which was exhibited for the edification of the young and aged, once a month, by her grandmamma."

"Very probably I might. Indeed, on reflection, I think I do remember enough to incline me to believe I ought to plead guilty to both these charges. What an exact register dost thou keep of all my enormities! My first offence I now recollect had refer-

ence to that old flirting Miss Thornly, who is nearer forty than I am thirty, and still preserves all the airs of a belle. Now, coquetry and girlish nonsense are so intolerable after five-and-twenty, I thought it right to ignore her claim to juvenility. As to my observations on Miss Lucretia, I own I love to unmask all such vain impostors, and, tearing the veil from their lofty pretensions, expose the emptiness of their pates. There is something so provoking, yet ludicrous, in seeing ignorance bedizened with the tinsel of erudition, that I honestly confess, when I am at too great a distance to fear any harm from the explosion, I do like to fire off a little innocent squib or two against petticoat pedants."

"Without entering on the vexed question of whether it be innocent to fire off squibs at our friends' follies and frailties, I ask you to define the *distance* when the amusement may be indulged without danger? Remember the fable of the Boys and the Frogs—the entertainment was entirely one-sided—the poor frogs could only humbly remonstrate that what gave delight to the boy-party was death to them; but those you offend can retaliate. '*On sera ridicule, et je n'oserai rire,*' was the remark of a celebrated French author, and be assured it was founded in wisdom. I will add other counsels of greater weight. Turn to Hamlet, and read the noble advice of Polonius to Laertes:

"Give thy thoughts no tongue.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel;
Beware of entrance to a quarrel."

"The beginning of strife is as the letting out of waters.' I quote from yet higher authority. None are too impotent to injure; and, dearest, some of these days I fear you may be made to feel that you have created hostile enemies by the indulgence of this your humour, and find you are not too far off to receive sharp wounds in return for your so-called innocent squibs."

"Probably! The world is no doubt fuller of assassins than good Samaritans; so, in recompense of your anxiety on my account, I will endeavour to be more guarded, and the next time I see an old worn-out spinster with flags of distress flying on her head in the shape of pink ribbons and spring flowers, or a silly literary daw trying to cover her dull plumage with the feathers of a bird of wisdom, I will think on thy sisterly love, and shut both my eyes and my mouth."

CHAP. XXV.

"I feel this thine endearing love
 All through my bosom : thou art as a dove,
 Trembling its closed eyes, and sleeked wings
 About me ; and the pearliest dew not brings
 Such morning incense from the fields of May,
 As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
 From those kind eyes." KEATES.

FELICIA's letter to Miss Berkely, saying that, if convenient to her mother, she should be happy to spend a few weeks at Elm Grove, was immediately answered by Mrs. Berkely, who requested her, in the most affectionate terms, to make such arrangements ere she left town as would enable her to spend the major part of the summer with them. Felicia felt much gratified by the kindness and strong expressions of regard in which Mrs. Berkely's invitation was couched, and, secretly determined that she would prolong her visit beyond a few weeks if possible, resumed the little arrangements she had been previously making for her journey into Leicestershire, with fresh avidity. She was aware, notwithstanding Mr. Marshington's assurances to the contrary, that her friend could not, for a long period, be sufficiently a convalescent to render the society of a visitor really acceptable, and as she had a sister of Mr. Marshington's residing with her, she could not hope to be of the least personal use during her recovery. She therefore intended to postpone the pleasure of waiting upon her till the autumn, and consequently felt additionally delighted at the prospect of spending a considerable period with the Berkelys.

Unwilling to leave Jenny exposed during her absence to both the unkindness of her fellow-servants and the contagion of their society, Felicia had already secured her an asylum with her relations, who were respectable people, and after again warning her against the temptations of a residence in London, she retired to her apartment at an early hour, that she might be in readiness to commence her excursion at seven the next morning.

"How delighted you look, Philly!" said Rosalind, who had risen to make her breakfast.

"I own I feel no uneasiness at the idea of quitting London, but that which springs from leaving you."

"And that will soon wear off, when in the society of the Berkelys," said she, archly.

"Oh, no, no! the Berkelys, much as I love them, taken in a body, are not half so dear to me as this;" and she fondly kissed the ivory hand that was playfully held up as if in the act of prophesying.

Rosalind was suddenly affected, and a tear dimming the liquid radiance of her clear dark eye, added ten-fold interest to her lovely features; but it was only for the moment. She was ashamed of anything like sentiment, and dashing away the un-

bidden stranger, she said, with a sly smile, "I wish you joy, not only of the change in your situation, my dear, but the information and pleasure you are likely to receive during your residence at Elm Grove. Berkely has taken a part of his estate into his own hands, and become a great farmer. Think, therefore, what a new turn will be given to your ideas. Dissertations on tolls and turnpikes, poor-rates and distrains, improvements and alterations, will be a delightful exchange for dialogues on balls and concerts, parties and *conversazioni*; while speculations on the decline and fall of agriculture, on the comparative merits of salt, sugar-scum, bone-dust, &c. &c., mingled with practical experiments on the advantages to be derived from the cultivation of floricin, mangel-wurzel, and ruta бага, will agreeably contrast with the dull conjectures and stupid occupations of the fashionable world."

"Where did you pick up this technical jargon?" cried Felicia, laughing.

"Jargon, truly!" said Rosalind. "Lightly as you may esteem my knowledge on such subjects, it is all that my instructress Miss Lucretia Beaumont acquired during a six months' residence in a farm-house, where she went after an indisposition, brought on by intense study, as her grandmamma said to all inquiring friends. I happened at that time to have an eye on your swain in perspective, and as it is always well to *appear* interested in a man's pleasures and pursuits (a word to the wise, Philly), I was at the trouble of becoming for a short time her pupil."

"And do her so much credit, that really a few more lessons would make you a rival instead of a scholar, and she might become jealous of you."

"Oh, no! for to be jealous, one must have a fear of inferiority, and that is a sensation she could never feel, so firmly is she entrenched in her own good opinion. Nor, in truth, would she have any reason; for though she has few brains, and little learning, she has great perseverance, with a large share of knack to overbalance her ignorance, and that does just as well with the majority of mankind. Jealous of me! Oh, no; for while she is the merest empty pretender that ever existed, she is in her own estimation a Minerva — has a brilliant understanding, a cultivated mind, a graceful person, a striking physiognomy, refined manners; and this she will persist in believing, in defiance of the continual sneers and laughter of her acquaintance. I, for one, spared no pains to open her eyes directly and indirectly, till I found she was invulnerable. You can't imagine how I exerted myself for her good: I interrupted her in the midst of her finest tirades. I begged her to repeat such and such sentences over and over again, for, indeed, I could not understand them; and when she had complied, still preserved a countenance of unenlightened vacuity. But all would not do. She was long insensible, even

to my endeavours; and then, ascribing them to malice and envy, remained even more firmly rooted in the conviction that she was the most distinguished of her sex. She has, in short, a sovereign specific against all such attacks, and it is vanity, vanity, vanity! 'Oh that,' as poor Burns says, 'some one the gift would gi'e us, to see ourselves as others see us!'"

And Rosalind looked in an opposite mirror as she spoke, with an air at once so surprised at her friend's folly, and so satisfied with the perfection of her own person, that Felicia could scarcely repress the smile that hovered over her lips, at this proof how ready we all are to pull the mote from our brother's eye, without perceiving the beam that is in our own. Rosalind and Lucretia pursued different paths; but each was as anxious to reach the Temple of Fame, and delighted with self, as the other.

"No," continued Rosalind, still viewing herself with increasing complacency; "the only returns I received for my efforts to help her to a little self-knowledge, the single subject with which she is entirely unacquainted, were two or three insolent looks, and a large portion of secret dislike."

"The rewards that are generally adjudged to those who take pains to give us gratuitous information on unpleasant topics," said Felicia. "For though we can sometimes bear to speak of our own faults, few are possessed of sufficient real humility to endure the idea that they are so glaring as to excite the observation of others; or are endowed with enough equanimity of mind to view without aversion those who not only evidently see our foibles with pleasure, but try to make us ridiculous."

"Thank you, Philly" (with a low courtesy); "that sly rap on the knuckles has effaced the kiss you were so civil as to give me just now on the same place."

"I hope not, darling Rosa, as I used to call you in our infant days, and the name is still dear to me; believe me, the one was as much the result of love as the other."

Rosalind shook her head, but the smile that accompanied this incredulous motion, was that of confiding attachment.

Lady Wyedale's carriage now drove to the door, and after fondly pressing Rosalind to her beating heart, Felicia hurried into it to hide the tears, that, in defiance of her wish, burst from her eyes at parting, even for a few months, with this beloved sister. As the carriage rolled through the dusky, half-peopled streets, Felicia felt almost sorry that she had left Rosalind. "Yet why should I lament that for a few months only we shall be separated?" she mentally reasoned; "Rosalind, dearly as I know she loves me, would not be guided by my advice. Had I perceived that I possessed the least real influence over her mind, never, never would I have quitted her for a moment. Perhaps, when I am away she may be more convinced of its tendency to promote her welfare; and as we dwell with increased regard on the maxims of those from whom we are torn apart by

death, so Rosalind may pay to the counsels of an absent sister that attention her pride would forbid her to grant while present."

Cheered by this hope, her spirits recovered their usual buoyancy, and letting down the glasses of the carriage to admit the enlivening breeze of morning, she contemplated her approaching visit with increased satisfaction.

The heavy dense atmosphere which is so often the precursor of a sultry day, was now dispersed by the glowing rays of the sun. Already the lovely hand of spring had mantled the trees in her fascinating livery, and sprinkled every field with her welcome flowers. The rich bunches of the lilac, clustering with laburnum's golden tresses, everywhere met her delighted gaze; and her eye was never weary of watching the varying forms of the dazzling clouds as they sailed through the serene vault of heaven, or gracefully undulating over the distant hills, blended them with the deep azure of the sky: her ear, never tired of listening to the melody of the lark and thrush, as their broken notes mingled with the passing breeze.

Elm Grove was little more than fifty miles from London; but as she had experienced some of those little difficulties which, even now in this age of general accommodation and luxury, sometimes attend a traveller, it was nearly eight o'clock ere she entered the village in which was situated the mansion of her friends. The gorgeous sunset was dissolved, and a still, serene evening had succeeded to its departed glory. The grey vapours of twilight were slowly stealing among the yet faintly illumined clouds, and deeper shades began to curtain the many tints which enlivened the distant objects. The tops of the hills were fading into irregular forms, and the woods that encircled the venerable residence of the Berkelys had assumed a darkly solemn hue as the carriage approached the avenue that led to the principal entrance.

At the extremity of a long vista of ancient elms, limes, and sycamores, among the fibres of whose antique roots were scattered in gay disorder the cowslip, daisy, harebell, and primrose, she obtained a full view of the house, and through an opening in the shrubbery, which encircled it, a peep at the village beyond. It was a large antique building, to which the hand of modern taste had added little of decoration, but much of comfort; for though the windows retained their pristine form, the narrow panes of our forefathers had given way to others of larger dimensions. The heavy portico in front was ornamented with a profusion of beautiful exotics: the lawn was smooth as the bowling-green, now becoming so obsolete; and on the tranquil waters of a small, but clear lake at its foot, was a pleasure-boat, gaily trimmed and decorated. The white walls of the village, their dazzling light, shaded by the clambering woodbine or rose, and their latticed casements flashing bright with the ruddy glow of the evening fire, formed a striking contrast to the sombre beauties of the

scene; while dimly, in the dewy light of evening, arose in solemn grandeur the castellated tower of the village church.

The carriage stopped while Felicia's eye was bent with silent admiration on this lovely picture, and in a moment Mr. Berkely appeared at the hall-door.

"We had almost given you up, my dear madam," he said, as he assisted her to alight. "And—but here is my sister." Miss Berkely affectionately kissed her, and, after stating the trifling delays which had retarded her reaching the Grove before, Felicia followed her into a large wainscotted apartment, where sat Mrs. Berkely, her daughter, and second son, whose resemblance to his brother immediately interested her in his favour. Mrs. Berkely received her with the affection of a parent, and though a tear arose to the eyes of each, as memory recalled to their recollection that Evanmore and Maria had both been lost since they last met, the struggle to repress their mutual regret was soon over.

It is indeed seldom that a well-regulated mind, however under the influence of calamity, cannot so far control its emotions as to prevent their ebullitions from destroying the harmony of general society.

The tea equipage was immediately introduced;

"And, while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Threw up a steamy column,"

Felicia surveyed the apartment with mingled surprise and pleasure. Everything that could gratify a refined taste, or contribute towards the comfort of the social hour, was there to be found. But, excepting a few exquisite old paintings, nothing bore the least resemblance to the residence she had left. The Grecian couches, Ottoman stools, and gilded finery of Lady Wyedale's drawing-room were here supplied by easy chairs and sofas of English shape and manufacture. The curtains, of plain crimson moreen, enlivened the dark shining oak floor and richly carved walls, on whose high polish the cheerful beams of a glowing fire shed a bright and golden tinge. A few valuable paintings, some china jars filled with flowers, a harp and piano, together with a small collection of chosen books, and Mr. Berkely's cabinet of coins and fossils, completed its furniture and decorations.

"You are surprised at the obsolete style of this apartment," said Mrs. Berkely, as she followed the glance of Felicia's eye; "but I have never been able to effect the slightest alteration in its appearance; for it is the same as when my marriage, and possesses a something of its own character. When, however, Berkely married, he saw it rendered more on a par with the modern style."

"Indeed, it never will be called upon to smile. "When I look over all the rest

of the house, but this room is as dear to me as to you. With it is associated the remembrance of all my infant joys, and the scarcely less pleasing amusements of more advanced life. Here I remember you taught me to read, and the only punishment I can recollect was banishment from its delights. Here, therefore, I must reign paramount, for I should esteem the removal of a fire-screen little less than the loss of an early friend."

Mrs. Berkely smiled; but it was not the smile of mere gaiety; and Felicia scarcely knew whether most to admire the filial love of the son, or the maternal wisdom and affection which had been its origin.

At an early hour they separated, and after a night of unruffled slumber, Felicia rejoined the family in better spirits than she had felt since her separation from Evanmore.

"You must consider yourself at home, my dear Miss Leycester," said Mrs. Berkely, when the party were about to separate after breakfast, "and without reference to our employments, pursue your own. A certain degree of independence in each is requisite to unite the family chain more firmly; the late change in your situation makes me esteem you so much the more closely united to us; and I shall lament to see you restrained, lest it may be a proof that you feel not for us the sentiments we all cherish towards you."

This was the only allusion Mrs. Berkely made to the dissolution of her engagement with Evanmore, of which she had early learnt from Miss Berkely; and grateful for her affection and delicacy, Felicia promised to consider Elm Grove a home during her visit there.

CHAP. XXVI.

"How various his employments, whom the world
Calls idle; and who justly, in return,
Esteems that busy world an idler too!
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoyed at home,
And Nature in her cultivated trim
Dressed to his taste, inviting him abroad."

COWPER.

"LIFE," it has been justly observed by one of the best and wisest of men, "consists not in a series of illustrious actions, but in the performance of daily duties, in the removal of small inconveniences, in the procurement of petty pleasures; and we are or ill at ease, as the main stream of life glides on smoothly, ruffled by small and frequent interruption."* Under the table roof of Mrs. Berkely, Felicia experienced the truth of admirable remarks. The society of which she was now a

* Dr. Johnson.

member seemed not distinguished by particular talent, or splendid instances of dazzling virtue; but everything that passed received the stamp of value and interest from the sympathy and affection that united the little circle; and there was an unrestrained gaiety, a confiding faith in each other, in this house, which forcibly struck her, from its contrast to Lady Wyedale's. Aware, in defiance of self-love, and continual efforts to drown the voice of conscience, she had few real claims to the love or esteem of her household, it was her ladyship's secret wish, and continual attempt, to set every member of it at variance with the rest, to preclude the possibility of such an interchange of sentiments as might tend to acquaint them yet more with the peculiarities of her temper and character. Hume has observed of King John, that it was the fate of that monarch to render those the enemies of himself, whom he tried to make the enemies of each other; and as the same punishment usually awaits the same offence, Lady Wyedale, notwithstanding her exertions, succeeded to such a degree, that everything like confidence was utterly banished from her mansion; she was herself a much greater object of dislike and distrust among her servants, than even her favourite maid—a personage of wonderful importance in the establishment—secretly feared, from the reputed heiress Rosalind downwards to its lowest member the poor parish apprentice. "There are a certain class of people, who are incapable of generous confidence in their equals, but who are disposed to yield implicit credit to the underhand information of mean emissaries." And to this class Lady Wyedale belonged. She was not, indeed, an indigenous plant, whose properties are known only to one country or one circle. Ill-humour, the idle suspicions, and unamiable propensities of an undisciplined heart and understanding are unhappily too common to all nations and all ages.

Violent measures are generally resorted to by those who have neither temper nor understanding to devise any other, to accomplish a favourite or necessary end. In her ladyship's house, therefore, every order was issued in the form of a threat; every trifling error or neglect treated as though it emanated from a determined disposition on the part of the offender to thwart or disobey the ruling powers; and, however circumstances might prove the impropriety and impolicy of her measures, her ladyship manfully determined to adhere to them with an heroic disregard to consequences. The future tense, her favourite rule of grammar, was her usual vehicle of expression; and the words "*I will*" and "*you shall*" constituted, in her opinion, the whole arcanum of government. Yet, while such was the system on which she acted, from a conviction of its sovereign efficacy, with that strange inconsistency which sometimes attends a quick, but not solid mind, Lady Wyedale always secretly esteemed and liked those persons the most highly who opposed her oppressive government, provided they, at length, submitted to its despotism. Conscious that

she had never tried to conciliate, or borne with an offence, but she had a sinister motive for her conduct, she always suspected the integrity of those whose natural mildness of character impelled them to endure her storms in silence, or whose treatment of those under them was more distinguished for gentleness than severity. Thus in the complaints of her farmers, she fancied she perceived the upright dealing of her agent: in the tears of the apprentice, a proof that the footman was merely making him perform the menial offices of his station. Those who spoke without doubt were sure to be listened to without distrust; vehement assertions of rectitude, clamorous protestations of innocence, and arrogant assumptions of ability, had always more weight with her than the calm denial, the temperate vindication, or modest diffidence, which are so frequently the characteristics of real probity and merit. She judged, in short, from her own principles, and could consequently form no right estimate of the workings of an upright, honourable, humble heart.

"How different," thought Felicia, as she unconsciously contrasted them together, "is Mrs. Berkely! She could never be more loved or admired in the zenith of her charms than now, when her forehead is shaded by the silvery hairs of age." "There is a something in your mother, that, in addition to the respect which must be felt for her, imperceptibly attracts the love of all around her," said she, one day, while walking in the garden with Miss Berkely and her sister.

"There is, indeed," she replied, "for as yet you know not half her perfections. That we are indebted to her for our being, is the least claim she has upon our gratitude. She has been more than a mother to us. She has been our friend, instructress, and guide. In our little difficulties and distresses she taught us, when children, to fly to her for assistance and consolation, and we still continue the delightful custom. When my mother first proposed to undertake the arduous task of education, many of her friends thought she could not devote the requisite time to us consistently with her other duties; but they knew not what regularity and zeal can effect. She was an early riser, and being unrivalled in domestic management, all her household affairs were arranged before breakfast. From nine to one she passed uninterruptedly in the school-room; after that period she was at liberty to pay or receive visits; and when not engaged with my father, or obliged to mingle in society, the rest of the day was likewise passed with us; for in the evening we brought our work into the drawing-room, and listened either to her conversation, or to some book which she generally read aloud for our amusement. These were some of the benefits she conferred upon us in infancy; in more advanced age she continued equally our firm friend. My father's paternal estate, I doubt not you have heard, was impaired by my grandfather's profuseness; and my father, willing to place John upon a footing with his ancestors, proposed

to leave us only two thousand each; but my mother resolutely opposed this unequal distribution of his property. Though devotedly attached to my brothers, she contended that our claims were even stronger than theirs. They could, she said, embark with honour in professions, if he had it not in his power to render them independent; but custom forbade women to engage in the pursuit of fortune, without a resignation of their station in society. She declared it would be cruel to give us, with the feelings, ideas, and wants of gentlewomen, a sum inadequate to support, even with the strictest economy, our rank as his daughters. She proposed various retrenchments in the establishment, and nobly insisted upon relinquishing the carriage, though a luxury to which she had been accustomed from her birth. We have heard of jealousy between mothers and their daughters, but heard it with amazement. My mother idolised all her family; but her daughters, she said, she considered her peculiar care. From infancy we learnt to regard her as our firmest friend. Even now I recall with pain the anguish we used in our childhood to feel, when she paid an autumnal visit to my grandmother. Her visit was limited to a month, for she has often declared she thought it highly injudicious in married women to make long absences from home. And indeed, dear Miss Leycester, I have often wondered at that being proposed as a specific to revive declining affection in the married breast, which all admit to be dangerous to the lover: nor can see on what just ground that severe trial, which so often proves the death of youthful affection, should be the renewer of attachment between persons who must necessarily be divested of those hopes and fears which are supposed to keep alive the passion in its earliest, warmest stage. But this is a subject on which, I own, I am not competent to speak," said she, a sweet blush suffusing her face. "Where was I before this digression?"

"You were saying, what grief we felt when my mother left us," said Emily. "And I remember well how we used to watch, with tearful eyes, the carriage, till it was hidden by the avenue, and then go and weep alone in our apartment; for she used to entreat us to restrain our sorrow, lest our father might fear we did not love him so well."

"Yes," resumed Miss Berkely, "in every act she was consistent. Never shall I forget the day that I attained my seventeenth year. She had been accustomed, on each return of our birthday, to make us some trifling present. On that morning she came into my room, and, opening three little parcels, desired me to take my choice. They contained all her trinkets, excepting my father's portrait and her watch. 'I have done with ornaments, dear Mary,' said she. 'In the language of the noble Roman matron, I can say, with truth, my children are my jewels. You are entering into life; and, though I esteem such additions to the dress perfectly unnecessary, yet, as the liberality of my

mother and husband have conferred them upon me, and custom authorises young persons in your sphere to wear these haubles, I beg you will choose which of these packets you prefer. I have divided them, to the best of my judgment, evenly. You are my oldest darling; make, therefore, your selection.' I entreated her to continue to wear what so well became her; but she refused, saying, 'I have long been indifferent to my appearance, excepting so far as is consistent with my rank in society, and my desire to remain pleasing to your father. He will not think me less agreeable without ornaments which he will see worn by his daughters. I don't know, indeed, that in thus resigning these gems, I am so disinterested as you imagine: I believe the wish to gratify him more than influenced this trivial sacrifice to you.' Dear Miss Leycester," she continued, dashing away a rising tear, "this was only one of the many delicate marks that evinced the sincerity of her love for us. We were receiving such hourly; and they can only be considered as the light graceful ornaments that deck a Corinthian pillar, and add to its beauty and elegance, without increasing its real strength or durability."

Mrs. Berkely, leaning on the arm of her eldest son, now joined them; and Felicia contemplated with increased sensations of love and reverence the exalted woman who had been the subject of such a panegyric from a child. "Well might she be the chosen friend of my aunt!" she thought; and, as her eye rested on her face, it appeared invested with more than mortal beauty. But it was the mind, the soul, that thus irradiated the features. Mrs. Berkely bore no traces of ever having possessed the dangerous gift of beauty; yet enough to excite interest; and there was a gentle expression in her mild intelligent eye that secured its continuance. A group of healthy boys and girls, all apparently under ten and eleven, with hoes, rakes, wheelbarrows, and spades, suddenly interrupted Felicia's meditations, and, drawing up before the party with many rustic bows and courtesies, requested to be told where they had best begin.

"These are our gardeners," said Mr. Berkely, as his mother and sisters left them, to direct these little children of industry, "and you will, perhaps, be surprised to learn that, with the assistance they receive from an old servant and ourselves, they contrive to keep the grounds in the nice state in which you see them." He looked round him with proud satisfaction as he spoke; but it was the pride which a good man feels, in contemplating the exertions of those whom he has trained to the habits of virtue and industry.

Felicia expressed her surprise that she had not sooner noticed them.

"They have not been here since your arrival," he replied. "We always excuse them during the hay and harvest seasons, that they may assist their parents. The former is now over, and they will remain with us till the latter commences. A few years

ago," he continued, "we thought this would be the best mode of employing the younger children of our poor neighbours till they became strong enough to do something more profitable; and time has strengthened our prepossession in its favour. They are thus gradually trained from their earliest infancy to labour; and, as we proportion their reward according to their diligence and attention, they learn to be industrious from a feeling of emulation. Thus habituated to acquire their own support, and depend on their own exertions, they find the duties of their more advanced age less irksome. We hope, too, that this mode of educating them to perform the necessary avocations of their humble sphere may engender habits of economy and virtue; for we require them to attend our little school an hour every day, and deduct a few pence weekly from their earnings towards the purchase of clothes, or any other necessary article. They are likewise encouraged to augment this fund by a little donation from ourselves, in proportion to the sum accumulated. Towards the aged we adopt a different system. They are provided with light work, encouraged to take care of the infants of their younger neighbours during their absences from home; and, in short, perform all those little offices of kindness, which, like the cup of cold water, given in charity, will not go unaccompanied by a blessing."

"These are, indeed, well-founded sources for that cheerfulness I have so often remarked in both your dependants and your family," said Felicia; "and my only regret arises from the consciousness that so few are thus able to confer extensive happiness on those around them."

"Little more than the will, and a firm determination to persevere a short time, is necessary," said he, modestly. "My young labourers do not, altogether, receive more than the wages of a clever gardener, and, with the assistance I before mentioned, they perform quite as well. Believe me, a little *personal attention* and *steady inclination* are the chief requisites necessary to better the condition of the poor, and my sisters unite with me most cordially in all my exertions to promote so desirable an end."

"Your sisters, are, I perceive, quite botanists," said Felicia, seeing Miss Berkely at that moment busy in instructing a little boy how to remove some bulbous roots which had done flowering.

"They are as much so as I wish them to be," said he, smiling. "Yet their knowledge extends little beyond an acquaintance with the names and properties of most common flowers, and a sufficient degree of practical skill as gardeners to cultivate such as may be ornamental and beneficial. With the minutiae of the science, or classification of the different species, they are unacquainted, and I do not wish to remove their ignorance. I consider gardening, however, so elegant an amusement, and so necessary a one for ladies who reside in the country, that I esteem the exertions of a most distinguished author to recommend it, in her admirable work of *Cœlebs*, not one of the least of its many merits."

Felicia involuntarily started. Such were the sentiments of Evanmore, when they perused it together, and, reminded by this trifling circumstance of the unhappy change which he avowed had since taken place in his opinions, she formed an excuse for leaving Mr. Berkely, that she might indulge a few moments of sorrow in her own apartment.

CHAP. XXVII.

" Ah ! that hallowed form is ne'er forgot
 Which first love traced ;
 Still it lingering haunts the greenest spot
 On Memory's waste.
 'Twas odour fled,
 As soon as shed,
 'Twas Morning's winged dream !
 'Twas a light that ne'er can shine again
 On life's dull stream.
 Oh ! 'twas light that ne'er can shine again
 On life's dull stream." MOORE.

THOUGH Felicia constantly endeavoured to regard Evanmore as a stranger, and exerted every power of her mind to reconcile herself to the idea, her efforts had not hitherto been crowned with the success she desired. Evanmore, in defiance of her attempts to banish him from her heart, remained there so firmly intrenched, that his image was continually present to her imagination ; and the sudden thrill of anguish that shot through her soul when any trivial event occurred to revive the remembrance of his alienation, betrayed that she could not yet teach herself to think with composure on their separation. For Felicia, alive to all her other weaknesses, and shrinking from the possibility of doing wrong, unconsciously nourished those feelings she thought herself hourly seeking to subdue. She was ignorant that her daily prayers for his mind to be enlightened, and his happiness preserved, fixed the remembrance of him more firmly in her bosom ; or that when she fancied she should never more feel sorrow, assured he had become all she wished, she instinctively thought he would then once more solicit a hand she should no longer fear to give him : nor let this error of a youthful mind be too severely censured. Felicia was one, among many others, to whom the secret workings and springs of the human heart are too often hidden by the deceitfulness of its nature. His instant flight into the country, his parting message, which Jenny had delivered with all due emphasis and expression, together with his continued residence at Alverston, which she casually learnt from a lady who knew something of his family connections, every day confirmed these feelings ; and, while openly striving to conceal her reviving hopes from herself, she secretly admitted the treacherous idea, that Evanmore had not yet parted with her to meet no more. Un-

consciously cheered by this insidious prospect, her spirits imperceptibly began to recover their former equable tone, and delighted with the change in her person and manners, Mrs. Berkely insisted on the prolongation of her visit. "The harvest season is just commenced," said she, when Felicia, apprehensive of intruding, was delicately urging the necessity of her return to town, "and you must not leave us at such a period of bustle and usefulness. John, you know, farms a part of his estate, and we all have consequently the feelings of farmers. His happiness and pursuits are indeed so identified with ours, that we take a deep interest in what we should otherwise probably regard with perfect indifference."

"I do not wonder at your attachment," said Felicia, a glow of enthusiasm mantling on her cheek as she spoke. "Who, indeed, can live with him and remain uninterested in his occupations, or insensible to his worth. Every other charm may be withstood, but benevolence like his is irresistible. Besides, I consider husbandry one of the most noble, interesting employments of man. It was that designed him by Heaven in his days of happiness and innocence, and surely none can ever be better calculated to preserve the mind from error and temptation—awaken its best feelings—excite its purest pleasures. When we lift up our eyes and see the trees loaded with fruit, the fields covered with corn, the gardens brilliant with flowers—when we hear the matin song of the lark, and the evening melody of the blackbird—when we see thousands of cattle given for our use,—the heart instinctively raises itself to Omnipotence; and, 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou so regardest him?' naturally bursts to the grateful lips."

"Then you will not be shocked or disgusted at Berkely's vulgarity, should you by chance see him in the corn-fields assisting in pouring out ale for the reapers," said Miss Berkely, laughing.

"Oh, no! I have not, fortunately, the smallest particle of a fine lady in my composition; and as my dear friend here kindly insists upon my remaining at Elm Grove till this important season is over, I am determined upon making myself useful. I beg, therefore, you will refrain from mirth, should you, on such an occasion, see me employed in aiding Mr. Berkely."

"Berkely!" cried his sister, as he then entered the room, "Miss Leycester has just been announcing her intention of aiding you in your exertions to render your reapers happy."

"Oh! that she would!" he said earnestly. "But I fear not."

"Indeed I will," cried Felicia, with the utmost simplicity. "I will not be the only indolent, uninterested person in the family, I assure you."

He walked to a window in silence; and while Felicia, unconscious that she had both awakened and depressed hope at the same moment, continued to question Miss Berkely as to the customs observed on such occasions, he remained leaning against the window-frame, till he was roused from his reverie by the

entrance of a servant, who presented Felicia with a letter from Rosalind.

Rosalind was a lively, but indolent correspondent ; and though Felicia had written constantly every week since her departure, she had only found leisure to answer her letters twice, and then in so much haste, that she had done little more than inform her Lady Wyedale still remained in town. Her present communication was of a more voluminous nature, and Felicia, opening it with pleasure, read as follows : —

“ From the style of your last effusion, dear Philly, I perceive you think me most grievously absorbed in the pomps and vanities of this wicked world ; and to convince you I really am not such a victim to them as you imagine, I will spin out this letter to the length of those dear, delightful epistles, which usually pass between boarding-school misses, when the pleasure of writing nonsense is augmented by its being a forbidden enjoyment.

“ When I reflect on the contents of your last letter, even I, albeit unused to moralising, can hardly forbear drawing a comment between the difference of our employments, not very favourable to myself. While you are, it seems, so occupied in assisting the Miss Bérkelys to reform their neighbours, diversified by a little herbalising and sentimentalising with the delectable John, that the day is too short for your avocations ; I am, it must be confessed, sadly at a loss how to get through it. Notwithstanding all my entreaties and hurricanes, Lady Wyedale will not leave London, though it was never known within the memory of man to be such a desert. Everybody gone ! I see at this remark your demure features relaxing into a smile, and I almost fancy I hear your soft interrogation of ‘ Everybody, Rosalind ? ’ Yes, I repeat, in this great Babel of London every creature gone ! Yet, you would perceive no sensible diminution of volume in the tide of life as it flows through the crowded streets, for we calculate by a different scale of computation — you count souls and bodies — I reckon up carriages and coronets. Well, to revert after this digression, to auntie Wyedale, if consistency be a virtue, she does possess that one solitary grace : she remains the same, presenting an eternal transition from fair to stormy, from cloudy to sunshine, and back again. She has promised to visit Brighton again in the course of a few weeks ; but her word unhappily is so little to be relied upon, that I scarcely permit myself to anticipate so desirable a change in my situation. Since I wrote last, I have scarcely been to half a dozen places worth mentioning ; it has, however, been my fate to encounter my late adorer and his cousin. The former tried to appear scornful and indifferent with all his might, and the latter looked a furious malignant, without the smallest personal effort. At the instant I met them, Mrs. Hustleton was in the act of communicating to her kind friend, dear Mrs. Swallowwell, that she had

been to pay a wedding visit to a pleasing young couple in our vicinity; because, although she knew little about them, she thought it would gratify them. Gratify persons infinitely superior to her in every respect! Mrs. Swallowwell paid her many compliments on her condescension, for even sensible people are often gulled by a dictatorial manner and unshaken self-confidence into a belief that there must be some ground for consequence so sturdily maintained, and that the most common-place observations, when delivered in the style of profound aphorisms, must contain more than mere every-day remarks. She was in the midst of some Baron-Munchausen story, invented to place her importance in vivid colours, when she saw me lending an ear to her eloquence. Her face instantly changed from its self-satisfied expression, into that of a fury; and tossing her head she walked with affected dignity from the place where she stood towards Osborne, who was lurching in the background. I was not sorry to escape this Scylla and Charybdis so quietly; and in the course of the evening I had a superlative treat, for I sat an hour with Miss Beaumont, who was unusually delightful. She is learning chemistry, I rather think, in consequence of the introduction of gas-lights into the metropolis; and hydrogen and oxygen, fixed air, muriatic acid, and the like, have usurped the place, as she told me, 'of severer studies.' At first, she looked very shy at me; but it suited my convenience to coax her into good-humour, for I had just then no one else with whom I liked to be better; and knowing she has so enormous an appetite for flattery, that when no gentleman is near to compliment her erudition, she will condescend to receive a civil thing or two from a woman, I plied her with such skill, that she forgot all my former misdemeanors, and we parted the best friends imaginable. Somebody says, it is our own vanity that makes the vanity of others so intolerable; and, *en vérité*, I believe there is wisdom in the remark. In a *tête-à-tête* I did not find her so disgusting; and after all, though a shocking plagiarist, I must admit there is some ingenuity in being able to apply the learning of others with such propriety, that it passes generally current for our own. At all events, that great gift of nature, an accurate memory, she certainly does possess, and her persevering industry is entitled to so much commendation, that she has my good wishes it may succeed in procuring for her a better reward than the white-eyed speculator in thistledown and sun-flowers. If, however, I know anything of the *men volk*, as a Somersetshire girl, who once sojourned two weeks with auntie Wyedale, used familiarly to designate the lords of the creation, she *bante* in any fear of having her studies interrupted by them. Well, learning has not impaired my vivacity or injured my beautiful person, nor shall it. I don't aspire to have my pretty little delicate symmetrical ankles and toes in-shrouded in blue. I would rather be a Ninon de Lenclos than a Madame Dacier, I assure you. By the way, this allusion to Hus-

leton and Co. reminds me of that *lusus natura*, John Berkely, on whom I once wasted so many Euphrosyna smiles, and lavished so many, I had almost said, Calypso wiles. I do not, however, feel my ill-success any blot on my escutcheon of pretence to transcendant charms: he would have fallen a victim but for his Mentorian Mamma, for which, once I could have murdered her, or at least taken her from her easy arm chair, and shook her out of her high-heeled shoes—that remnant of former vanities which demonstrates the good old gentlewoman is quite mortal after all. She knows full well that that inch of morocco marvellously helps her natural five feet four to maintain the dignity of her presence. Yet really, now the mania is over, I am amazed what could ever tempt me to consider him a conquest worth making. He has neither a title nor a large fortune; is neither tall (a *sine qua non* in a man) nor peculiarly graceful; is excessively plain, and never pays compliments. For my part, I think he must have mingled a love-potion with his sherry or champagne, for he was exactly everything I had determined, in the sunny season of gay sixteen, not to like. Still, even now, I must confess the horrid insensible wretch has something inexplicably taking about him. I cannot tell what, unless it may be in the originality of his ideas, or the simplicity and enthusiasm of his manners; for his conversation is never what I call very lively, or amusing; but then it is that, you will say in your sanctified tones, of a man of sense, information, and honour. And his voice—ah, there it is—that I admit is his charm. I have, or we have, found it out. So clear, so expressive, and his language so plain and unaffected, yet energetic and explanatory of what he means. Well! I conclude, like the old philosophers, all is for the best! He would have been sadly too good and clever for me, not that I shall choose a man who has not a sufficient portion of sense to discover mine; for fools are proverbially the most difficult of all beings to manage, and sometimes I should be apt to fear where the husband feels apprehensive of inferiority, he may be inclined to oppose matter to mind. With this eulogium on your future spouse, I must really bring my letter to a conclusion, for I cannot, in spite of my ingenuity, contrive to scribble anything more. Adieu, therefore, my dearest Philly, and with Lady Wyedale's love, believe me

“Your ever fascinating and affectionate,

“Though unworthy, Sister,

“ROSALIND LEYCESTER.

“P. S.—The postscript of a woman's letter has from time immemorial been esteemed the best part of the production; and, after a very unusually stupid composition, one naturally looks for something at its close to indemnify the time lost in its perusal. Here, then, you will not be disappointed. I have opened the seal to say we set off in four days for Brighton; and if you choose to join us, you must leave Elm Grove immediately. The motive of

this unexpected haste is, to escape my uncle James, and his four daughters, who have written to say they shall be in town in a week. Francis the First exclaimed, when he mounted his horse after Charles released him from a prison, 'Now I am a king again!' and this manœuvre convincing me I have nothing to apprehend from tall cousin James, I cry, 'Now I am Lady Wyedale's heir once more!' I hope I need not say, whenever these golden visions are realised, my Philly's generosity to me will not escape my recollection. Knowing your attachment to the Berkelys, I have sounded Lady Wyedale on the subject, and should you prefer remaining at Elm Grove, I do not think she would be displeased. Adieu, dear Philly, once more thy degenerate *sœur*,
ROSALIND."

For some moments surprise kept Felicia silent. She then turned to Mrs. Berkely, stated the nature of Rosalind's communication, and proposed leaving the Grove on the ensuing day.

"Do you think Lady Wyedale will be offended if you do not rejoin her?" said Mrs. Berkely, who knew Felicia would have little pleasure in revisiting Brighton, the scene of her former happiness with Evanmore.

Felicia candidly declared, that she had no reason to fear she would; and after a little friendly altercation, it was finally settled that she should remain at the Grove till Lady Wyedale's return to town.

To Felicia this arrangement was extremely gratifying. She had many reasons for disliking Brighton; and as Rosalind and Lady Wyedale were again on amicable terms, she had little reason to expect that the latter would be very kind to her. She had at length perceived, that her ladyship derived as much pleasure from playing off one niece against another, as Rosalind experienced while pursuing the same system with her lovers; and though she undoubtedly treated her with less harshness since her dismissal of Evanmore, than she had previously done, she was still so far from evincing for her anything like attachment, that she could not avoid rejoicing at their continued separation. Her heart dilating with pleasure, she wrote to mention Mrs. Berkely's wish that she should extend her visit until her return from Brighton; and when her ladyship's consent, in a few hasty lines written by Rosalind, reached her, she felt as much delight as most young ladies would have experienced on receiving permission to spend a winter in all the fascinations of London; and far greater than was the portion of her sister, when the unexpected visit of Mr. Leycester at length decided Lady Wyedale to leave town.

Rosalind, in fact, in defiance of the strain of affected vivacity that ran through her letter, felt, by no means, elate. Felicia's remarks on Lord Edgermond's conduct had sunk deeper than she chose to avow. Yet, as his lordship still continued to breathe into her ear everything but a positive declaration of marriage.

she was unwilling to believe he had no serious intention of addressing her. The same obstacle to their wishes indeed remained. Perhaps it was therefore idle to expect him to be more explicit. She was not, however, perfectly satisfied, much as she desired to be so, that he might not without impropriety have done more than hint at his situation—wish Lady Charlotte Edgermond married with all his soul—execrate the prudent policy of his uncle Lord Wilberton, who had been the cause of his present entanglement—prophesy that he should wear her ladyship's patience out at last, and express his hopes that he should then receive the hand of the loveliest woman in the kingdom. Like herself, his lordship was again on the wing for Brighton; and after some struggles she determined, if he pursued towards her the same cold policy which had given her so much uneasiness when last there, she would heroically dismiss him from her thoughts.

While such were the speculations and resolutions of the lovely Rosalind, her less fashionable sister entered with pleasure into the rustic employments of her friends.

There is no method so sure to obtain the love of others, as that of evincing a sincere affection for them. Felicia felt she was thus loved, and each day saw her more desirous to deserve their regard. In the absence of their juvenile gardeners, she assisted the Miss Berkelys to keep down the weeds in the shrubbery; and as she contemplated the fine healthy glow exercise diffused over the manly face of Mr. Berkely while superintending the labours of his men, or witnessed the respectful affection which their ready smiling attention to his orders announced, she thought him no longer plain. Yet another pang at the difference between his pursuits and those of Evanmore's sometimes darted through her heart.

"But such also may be Evanmore's employments," she thought, "when he shall have seen the fallacy of his present pleasures—the errors that now obscure his fine nature."

There was rapture in the bare idea; and the bounding step, the beaming eye, again bespoke internal peace.

Thus lightly had glided away the jocund season of harvest, when Mrs. Berkely received a letter from a distant relative, requesting to see her and the Miss Berkelys for a week or fortnight. As her friend felt much indisposed, and from her advanced time of life could not hope to weather the storm she had so long been buffetting, Mrs. Berkely determined to leave the Grove immediately, with one of her daughters, who, after having spent a few days with her, should return home, and be replaced by her sister. Felicia saw the motive of this arrangement, thought it was delicately hidden under the plea of Mrs. Berkely's being unwilling to leave her servants without some directress; and regretted that her uncertainty respecting Lady Wyedale's present residence precluded the possibility of instantly rejoining her. To her last

letter, Rosalind had never replied, and as in her former she hinted that their stay at Brighton was very precarious, she knew not where to direct her steps. She was secretly lamenting this unfortunate circumstance, when a servant announced Mrs. Dursley, and two of her daughters.

Mrs. Dursley was an old acquaintance, though not a very near neighbour of the Berkelys, and willing to enliven the little party she was leaving, Mrs. Berkely mentioned the cause of her proposed visit, and requested that the young ladies would spend a day with them in her absence.

"My daughters would be very happy, I am sure, to accept your obliging invitation," said Mrs. Dursley; "but would it not be better for Miss Leycester to pass the week you propose being from home with us? I feel almost assured you would take both the Miss Berkelys, were you not reluctant to leave her at the Grove; and, I assure you, I shall rejoice to receive her under my protection during your absence. I had once the happiness of slightly knowing your aunt, as I mentioned to you, when I had first the pleasure of seeing you," she continued, turning to Felicia, "and independently of Miss Leycester's own claims to esteem, her affinity to Mrs. Beauclerc must ever render her a welcome guest."

Felicia felt extremely gratified by this polite and agreeable invitation. Of Mrs. Dursley she knew little; for though some morning calls had passed between her and the Berkelys since her residence at the Grove, they did not appear very intimate: but that little was calculated to impress her with a high opinion of her character. She was the mother of the Dr. Dursley, from whose skill Lady Wyedale anticipated so much advantage; and while she heaved an involuntary sigh, as she recollected that the first mention of the name had produced the first unkind remark which Evanmore had ever addressed to her, she remembered with pleasure that the dialogue that occasioned it was produced by a sneer at the reputed sanctity of his family. Circumstances had since convinced her, there was no foundation for the rumour of his engagement to Miss Berkely; but nothing had transpired to contradict the assertion that the Dursleys were an eminently pious family; and Felicia instinctively felt her heart warm towards all who agreed with her on religious points, though she was far from disliking or censuring those who did not. Aware of Mrs. Berkely's real motive for leaving Miss Berkely at the Grove, she instantly availed herself of Mrs. Dursley's hospitality; and too ingenuous to insist upon an arrangement, which delicacy alone had impelled her to make, Mrs. Berkely assented to this alteration in her plans with pleasure. Ere they parted, it was settled that Felicia should accompany Mrs. Berkely and her daughters, as far on their way as to a neighbouring village, from whence the distance to Dursley House would only prove a pleasant walk.

This little variation in her plan rendering it necessary that she should make some further arrangements for the comfort and accommodation of her sons, thus left by themselves, Mrs. Berkely resolved not to set off until she had taken an early dinner; and, busied in preparing for her little excursion, Felicia had no opportunity of speaking of her new friends till they all entered the carriage. She then expressed the high opinion she entertained of them, and felt somewhat surprised, when Mrs. Berkely simply said, in reply to her panegyric, that she believed they were a very orderly, respectable family, and always wished and intended to perform the duties of their station with propriety.

Before the momentary astonishment she felt at this cool encomium wore off, the carriage stopped; and after taking an affectionate leave of her companions, Felicia commenced her walk to Dursley House.

CHAP. XXVIII.

"Souvent on tire plus de fruit de ses fautes que de ses bonnes actions; les grandes actions enflent le cœur, et inspirent une présomption dangereuse; les fautes font rentrer un homme en lui-même, et lui rendent la sagesse qu'il avoit perdu dans les bons succès." FENELON.

Mrs. DURSLEY's invitation had been given with such apparent sincerity and friendliness, that Felicia, in addition to a former predilection in her favour, felt disposed to consider herself and family with peculiar regard; and as she pursued her walk to their mansion, became almost inclined to wish that Mrs. Berkely's praise had been of a warmer character. Something like shame flitted across her mind as this undefined censure indistinctly presented itself to her imagination. "Do I well," she cried, "to be angry with those who approach so nearly towards the glorious goal of perfection, because they have not yet reached its splendid bourne; when years of labour and self-denial must pass over my head, ere I shall gain that summit of excellence they have already attained?"

The appearance of Mrs. Dursley and her daughters, who came to meet her, interrupted this self-reproach, and, gratified by this delicate attention, she felt every previous prepossession in their favour revive. At the tea-table she was introduced to Mr. Dursley and his two youngest sons; for Dr. Dursley his mother made a professional apology. Mr. Dursley appeared a gentlemanly, good-tempered man; but of his sons she could form no estimate, as they preserved a profound silence during the repast, and the instant it was ended, left the room.

"I fear," said Mrs. Dursley, "you will find it very dull here, Miss Leycester. We have so many resources within ourselves we never experience *ennui*; but our friends are sometimes a little

weariness of its monotony, I am afraid. Those, especially, whose religious sentiments are not in unison with ours, must find its calm enjoyments insipid, but that I think, on reflection, can't be your case. Mrs. Beauclerc was, I have heard, a most excellent Christian, and I dare say held all public amusements in as much abhorrence as we do."

"My aunt was, indeed, a most exemplary woman," said Felicia, "and we had, in truth, too many sources of happiness at home to be inclined to seek it abroad."

Mrs. Dursley looked scarcely satisfied with this ambiguous reply. "Mrs. Beauclerc, I presume, considered public amusements criminal?" said she, in a tone of deep inquiry.

"The frequent use of them highly so," said Felicia, "but she was disposed rather to consider the abuse of such scenes wrong than——"

"I am astonished," interrupted Mrs. Dursley, "I should have thought on that point all real Christians would be unanimous."

"My aunt did not personally approve of young persons being initiated into such scenes," said Felicia, who now thought it right to state Mrs. Beauclerc's sentiments, "lest they might be misconceived, or taught to expect in them a pleasure which, on trial, they cannot yield, and we never felt the want of them to enliven our solitude; but she did not condemn those who occasionally partook of them, because she said the world would never be brought to think alike on all points, and where they agreed in material ones, she thought minor differences ought to be waved."

"Mrs. Beauclerc judged according to the best of her opinion," said Mrs. Dursley, "no doubt, but I must own in this age of laxity and irreligion, I am inclined to think that real Christians are called upon to be decisive. Lukewarmness and morbid insensibility to spiritual things is the error of the times, and those who would wish not only to prove an example to others, but be themselves something more than mere professors, should nobly resist the stream of impiety, and struggle, without ceasing, to reform the corruption of human nature."

"They ought," replied Felicia, "but all are not gifted with equal powers or opportunities, and let us hope, that they who steadily perform their own duties, and walk humbly with their Maker, will be accepted, though they may not possess those splendid attributes and shining virtues which are necessary to form the character and mark the conduct of the favoured few who are destined to the arduous task of stemming the torrent of popular immorality."

Mrs. Dursley joined in this hope, but it was evident she was not quite satisfied with the termination of the argument, for she once or twice observed during the evening, that "we should not follow a multitude to do evil." That it was the duty of all to expose what they deemed wrong in the practice of others, without a cowardly fear of being laughed at by the worldly and

thoughtless, and that Christianity had more to dread from the supineness of its friends, than the hatred of its enemies.

These remarks were so manifestly founded in truth, that Felicia readily assented to them, and ascribing Mrs. Dursley's zeal to that strict piety she had often heard mentioned as peculiar to her, felt her, if possible, rise in her estimation, though she still saw no reason to apprehend that the milder virtues would not meet their reward, because native timidity of character and retiring habits forbad their possessors from openly taking that distinguished station in the religious world which Mrs. Dursley esteemed essential in all who professed to be influenced by the principles of the Christian religion.

"Miss Leycester, will it be disagreeable to you to join with us in family prayers?" said Mrs. Dursley, after the sandwich-board had been removed.

"Disagreeable!" replied Felicia. "Oh, no, I shall rejoice at the opportunity."

"Our prayers will probably be unlike any to which you have been accustomed."

"Forms are immaterial to me," said Felicia. "Agreeing as we do in essentials, they, my dear madam, can make no difference."

Mrs. Dursley rung the bell, and desired a servant to inform the young gentlemen that she was going to prayers.

"Mr. Dursley," said she, stepping up to her husband, who was fast asleep in his chair, fatigued with a hard morning's coursing, "I am going to begin prayers."

He did not speak. She applied her hand to his shoulder, with a degree of violence, Felicia thought, a little unnecessary.

"We are going to prayers. You are so sleepy always!"

"Prayers! prayers! Oh, very well, my dear," said he, rubbing his eyes, "very well. You may begin."

The two Mr. Dursleys now entered, and after the servants were all assembled, Mrs. Dursley repeated some long extempore prayers, in which Felicia joined as well as she could, for they were so different from those to which she had been accustomed, the beautiful manuals of Bishops Wilson, Jeremy Taylor, and Andrews, that, ere they were finished, she half regretted those excellent guides to devotion seemed to be unknown to her hostess.

On the ensuing day, she awoke at an early hour, and, unwilling to be too late for the morning devotions of the family, descended to the drawing room, where the family usually sat, a little before eight. They had not yet met, and she amused herself by taking a survey of its contents. On the table lay a large bible, splendidly bound, and scattered about were several religious tracts, which seemed rather to touch upon doctrinal than practical points. A grand piano was open: and the profusion of light expensive trifles that ornamented the chimney-piece, and several

inlaid tables, announced that Mrs. Dursley's religion was not of a cast too gloomy to permit her to enjoy all the elegancies of life. "I should have been sorry to have found her unnecessarily rigid," thought Felicia, as she made the remark: "so many means of gratification would not have been extended to us if it were criminal to partake of them; and while we neglect not the duty of charity, it is right in the affluent thus to encourage ingenious merit."

The breakfast-bell rang as she concluded this mental soliloquy, and she instantly went into the breakfast-room. Mrs. Dursley was already making tea.

"Good morning, my dear Miss Leycester! I hope I have not long kept you waiting; but I could not sooner collect the family, for Dr. Dursley came home late last night, and we sat up engaged in conversation with him long after you retired. This must also be my apology for missing morning prayers. We are generally pretty constant; but in a large family it is impossible to achieve it always, and we should not attend too much to the ceremonial of religion."

"Undoubtedly not," replied Felicia; yet her conscience seemed to whisper, that all domestic arrangements, in one whose piety was of so exalted a caste, ought to be made subservient to the "one thing needful." The prompt attendance of Mr. Berkely's little family flock rose to her mind's eye, but she remembered the self-reproach she incurred the evening before by daring to censure Mrs. Berkely, and she suppressed any further reflection on the subject.

Dr. Dursley, now introduced to her for the first time, was a little, genteel, slight, formal-looking man, of such peculiar neatness in his appearance, that an enemy might designate it by the term finical; but his face, though small and delicate in its complexion, was not without expression. What that expression might indicate, Felicia could not well divine, and she was endeavouring to assist her judgment by recalling some of the rules of Lavater, when memory suggested to her fancy the reign of Charles the First; and in his precise physiognomy, reserved deportment, and investigating suspicious eye, she could scarcely think it a want of charity to trace some resemblance to the adherents of Oliver Cromwell and his round-headed junto. His brothers were two fine-looking young men, and appeared immersed in the pursuits of all other young men; for having shook off the taciturnity of the preceding evening, they discussed, during breakfast, the respective merits of their dogs, horses, and guns; and detailed many anecdotes illustrative of their skill in driving, coursing, and shooting, to which Mrs. Dursley, at least, listened with all the fondness of maternal affection, till they suddenly rose up, and, regardless of the Miss Dursleys' wish that they should join them in a walk, quitted the room, saying they should go to the kennel.

Felicia, who saw a shade of discontent lour on Miss Dursley's

brow, instantly regretted that such excellent young men should appear so negligent of those common attentions which contribute so much towards the peace and happiness of the domestic circle. It soon, however, wore off, and after the gentlemen left them, the ladies of the family were at perfect liberty to begin the employments of the day.

Felicia felt some curiosity to know in what manner so peculiarly pious a family disposed of their time, and, hoping to reap some benefit from her visit, accompanied them into the drawing-room. Miss Dursley immediately sat down to the piano; Louisa drew towards her a work-table, on which she was painting a group of flowers; and Charlotte, unlocking a splendid satin-wood netting-box, began a silk purse.

"I dare say you are surprised to see us all so industrious!" said Mrs. Dursley, taking up a hearth-rug which she was working in that most minute of stitches, tentstitch; "but I esteem it extremely culpable to be idle, and even in a retired village like this, we always find a plenitude of employment."

Felicia, remembering how much of her own and her aunt's time had been engrossed in visiting their poorer neighbours, and the unremitting endeavours of the Berkelys to relieve the wants of their tenantry and dependants, believed Mrs. Dursley meant to allude to similar occupations, and replied, "No doubt, in so populous a village, you have many claimants on your leisure and charity."

"Oh! many," said Mrs. Dursley; "but with a family of my own, you must be well aware it would not be in my power to visit and instruct from house to house, as your aunt probably did: besides which, the poor here are a very depraved, disorderly, lazy people, and that is, you know, sad encouragement to go amongst them."

"But they need admonition the more," said Felicia timidly, half afraid she was treading on slippery ground.

"Unquestionably; and while I thought it would be of any benefit to them, I did not relax in my endeavours to save them; but at length finding my efforts futile, I own, I became heartless, and have not latterly been much in their cottages. My daughters occasionally call to leave with them the tracts I receive from the Society monthly; but they are so hardened, they scarcely seem sensible of the obligation; and till they are grateful for spiritual aid, it would, I think, be wrong to afford any other."

Felicia was silent. She had been taught to do her duty without being influenced by the hope of any reward in return. "Be neither offended nor discouraged, my dearest child," Mrs. Beauchlere often said to her, "should you perceive neither gratitude, nor any rapid improvement in those you try to serve. It is in another world we shall reap the fruit of our labour; and till we are its inhabitants, we can never even know how far our exertions may have been crowned with success." Mrs. Dursley's and

Mrs. Beauchere's plans were in total opposition to each other ; for Mrs. Beauchere, though she esteemed spiritual instruction of far greater importance than temporal aid, generally *prepared* the mind by previous acts of personal kindness to receive, as a *further* and *higher* proof of her regard, that which related to the soul ; and as her system had been attended with singular success, Felicia could not assent to the wisdom of Mrs. Dursley's.

"I hope," said Mrs. Dursley, in a voice of alarm, "your aunt did not think it right to encourage idleness and vice?"

"No," said Felicia, firmly ; "when repeated acts of kindness failed to soften the heart, and unceasing admonitions to awaken the conscience, she then desisted from her fruitless endeavours, that she might not bestow her time and her purse, both of which she considered as sacred deposits, injudiciously or improperly ; but these were rare instances ; and even under such circumstances, when the unhappy wretches were suffering from age, sickness, or want, she did not deem it right wholly to withhold occasional assistance ; because she said, our Heavenly Father makes His sun to shine both on the just and on the unjust. And, indeed, my dear madam, if He refused his gifts till we deserved them, should we now be in possession of all those luxuries and enjoyments that so much enhance the value of every other blessing?"

"Undoubtedly, we are all sinful creatures !" said Mrs. Dursley, after a slight pause of seeming embarrassment. "It is impossible we can sufficiently appreciate the unmerited goodness of the Divine Being ; but because He thinks fit to withhold His judgments till the day of final account, I cannot think we ought to foster the wicked and lazy, if only for example's sake."

"My aunt did not foster, my dear madam ; she only extended the hand of compassion when they were sick and in misery," said Felicia, hesitating between a fear of offending her antagonist, and a wish to vindicate her aunt.

"Nor would I refuse such aid when they absolutely required it," said Mrs. Dursley, "and have told them they may send to Dursley House to ask charity when they are in need of it ; but even then I deem it proper to make some inquiries, and usually employ my daughters on such occasions."

"Yes," said Miss Louisa Dursley, who seemed the only one inclined to hazard an opinion, "and the poor here are so dirty, that it is horrible to go into their little places. When I escape fleas and a fever after such visits, I always consider myself very fortunate ; but, perhaps, that is not the case in every village."

"Poverty generally wears the same aspect," said Felicia, drily, "though I certainly do not remember ever to have suffered in the way you describe."

"No, I dare say not," said Mrs. Dursley. "The fact is, however, as Louisa states it here. We are unfortunate in living in such a neighbourhood, for it is very shocking to one's feelings to

see human nature so degraded. Why, they are so stupid, scarcely any of them can read."

"Then the religious tracts, you said you were so kind as to distribute, can be of little use to them?" said Felicia.

Mrs. Dursley coloured. "Their children can, no doubt," said she, coldly, "for there is, I presume you know, a Sunday-school at Woodburn, which the Miss Berkelys attend. I should have instituted one myself had not this been so near; and I fear Mrs. Berkely might think them intruders, or when the weather is fine, the Miss Dursleys should assist. I, of course, am out of the question, for I think married women have too many duties to discharge at home to leave them leisure for such pursuits."

She stopped, and seemed to expect some answer from Felicia, but again Felicia was silent. Further intercourse with the world had not altered her original belief, that *even married women* might devote a certain portion of their time to the *practical* part of charity; or convinced her, that that leisure which they seemed always able to devote to morning calls and unnecessary visits, might not occasionally be diverted from its usual channel, to that of active benevolence.

The entrance of Dr. Dursley put an end to a dialogue, that did not promise to increase the mutual good opinion of either party; and with a yet stronger sensation of remorse for her half-formed censure of Mrs. Berkely's coldness, when assenting to the high character of her hostess, she prepared to accompany the Doctor and his sisters in a walk. Their path lay through the village, and Felicia could not help acknowledging, with a sigh, the justice of Miss Louisa's philippics on the dirt and wretchedness that marked the abodes of her unfortunate neighbours. The windows were mostly either broken or stuffed with rags; and whole groups of half-naked children sprawling on the dusty road, betrayed there was no school to shelter their infancy.

"What swarms of children poor people always have!" said Miss Dursley, drawing back with apprehensive dismay from a clamorous little urchin, who, more importunate than his playmates, pursued them to petition for a half-penny to buy bread.

Weary of his entreaties, Felicia threw him a penny. The Doctor shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you approve of giving money indiscriminately to all who solicit your bounty, Miss Leycester?"

"No," said Felicia, "I think too much pains cannot be taken to ascertain that we bestow our alms on proper objects. In this instance, I was overcome by the wretched appearance and persevering solicitations of the little beggar, and the sum was so trifling, I shall not reproach myself with it, should it turn out to have been applied to a different purpose from that intended."

"Have you known the Berkelys very long?" said he, rather suddenly.

"No," said she, glad to change this topic; "I have not per-

sonally had that happiness more than a year ; but they have been known to me, by character, since my childhood ; for Mrs. Berkely was the friend of my aunt Beauclerc, and intimacy has increased their claims to my attachment and respect. Mr. Berkely, I think, I have heard, was a school-fellow of yours. What an excellent, exemplary man he is."

"Yes," said the Doctor, "I believe he has a good heart. But I am told he is temporising, like his mother."

"Temporising !" repeated Felicia.

"Yes ; it is some years since we were intimate. I speak, therefore, only from report, which says, he is inclined to indulge in all the pleasures of the world."

"And which of its enjoyments do you resign?" thought Felicia, as her eye glanced over his elegantly arranged dress, and her fancy presented the many luxuries that graced his home. "I am, then, more fortunate than you," said she, with something like distance, "for I can, from experience, say, neither Mrs. Berkely nor her children are disposed to partake immoderately of any of the gifts of fortune ; or, in the plenitude of their blessings, lost to the wants of their suffering fellow-creatures."

A slight shade passed over his face, but it was gone in a moment, and he said, with an unhesitating voice and firm countenance, "I am really glad to hear it from such high and disinterested authority."

Felicia thought he laid unnecessary emphasis on the word *disinterested*, and, without being able to account for her emotions, felt displeased and dispirited. The rest of the walk passed in almost total silence ; and when she found herself in the privacy of her apartment, she had so little leisure to dress for dinner, she had no time to analyse the nature or cause of her feelings. The last bell rung as she finished her toilet, and when she reached the dining-room, she found the rest of the family just assembled.

Apparently with a view to atone for the neglect of morning prayers, Mrs. Dursley's grace was so long, that Mr. Dursley appeared to lose all patience before it was half concluded ; but, in defiance of his restless attitudes and eager eye fixed on her lips, she calmly persevered to the end.

"Come, my dear," cried he, before the last sound of her voice had entirely died away, "pray, let's have dinner. I've been coursing all morning — you should consider."

"No," replied she, her face swelling with self-approbation, "I shall never consider *such* a circumstance at *such* a time."

"You would, though, if you were desperately hungry, like me," said he.

"I hope I should never so far forget my duty," was the reply.

"Miss Leycester," he cried, without appearing to hear this rejoinder, "I will trouble you for some of that calf's-head hash.

It is as cold as a stone," said he, casting a melancholy look upon his wife, when she complied with his request.

"It certainly is!" said she, tasting it herself, before she appeared to give any credit to his statement. I believe I must part with my cook. I am very unfortunate in my servants; for though they have advantages with me they can never receive in any other place, I don't find them sensible of their obligations. This woman lived five years with a particular friend of mine, and brought an amazing character with her; still, in the six months she has been here, she has behaved so ill, I fear I must discharge her, which I shall be concerned to do, on account of my friend, Lady Reynolds, who recommended her."

"Before you do, I hope you will ascertain that her successor is as clever as you imagine; for, after all, though the hash was cold, she is a very tolerable cook."

Mrs. Dursley gave him a look she meant should reach his eye only, but it failed in its destination, and was perceived by Felicia, instead of her husband.

There was a something in this short dialogue, united with the conversation of the morning, that imperceptibly lowered Mrs. Dursley in Felicia's estimation, and, without being able to assign the exact cause of this change in her sentiments, ere she retired to her room she felt that she should not be sorry when Mrs. Berkely's return to Elm Grove would put a period to her visit.

CHAP. XXIX.

"Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

FURTHER intimacy with the inhabitants of Dursley House did not revive the favourable impression Felicia had conceived of them while a stranger to their habits and sentiments, but from report: nor could she justly be censured for this alteration in her opinions respecting them, for she had been early taught to make her faith an active principle, and to dread, if her benevolent feelings had no object on which to pour themselves, that they might become so dormant as never to awaken at the voice of misery. Hers was, in short, that "*religion of the heart*"* which is shown in practice, not professions; and she soon perceived, though Mrs. Dursley's faith was unbounded, her practice appeared somewhat deficient. She was perpetually insisting upon the merits of the Atonement, but she did not seem at all sensible that we must fulfil our part of the covenant ere we can hope to

* See Practical Piety, page 11.

derive benefit from it ; or to remember, that self-denial and good works formed any part of our duties here.

She abhorred public amusements, partly on the ground of their being a waste of time and money, yet she had no idea that the day consumed in music, drawing, and all the little acts of fashionable idleness, was misspent ; or that her daughters should not study to appear in every costly trifle of fashionable life. She generally read prayers morning and evening ; but she would kneel down in the midst of an angry argument, and resume it on rising. She read the Bible, but those passages which related to *almsgiving*, and all the multiplied virtues included under the comprehensive term of *charity*, she perused without seeming to consider with the smallest attention ; for her assistance to her poor neighbours was of the most limited nature, and her petulant replies to Mr. Dursley and her family evinced she had no conception it is more honourable to rule the temper than take a city, or was aware that the ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit were held by her favourite apostle, St. Paul, in the highest estimation. She affected to rejoice at the prospect of knowledge being communicated to the lower orders of society, but she contributed no personal assistance to the undertaking ; and her pecuniary aid, low as her rank would decently admit, often fell short of that bestowed by many other persons who did not profess to anticipate from it so glorious a result. When called upon, indeed, for a charitable subscription, she generally gave many excellent reasons for either declining her assistance altogether, or contributing a very trifling sum. "People with families *must* consider their children. She wished well to every benevolent institution, but one should be just before one is generous." When, however, she had a dress to purchase, an entertainment to give, or an article of elegant luxury to procure, these prudential reasons gave way. "She must then do like everybody else. It was impossible *always* to oppose the world. Appearances must be preserved to a certain degree by all persons. It could not be expected people should deprive themselves of every comfort of life. It was a duty we owed to society to respect its conventionalities."

She frequently lamented the proneness of human nature to sin, and deplored that the heart was deceitful above all things ; yet she could make few allowances for those of her acquaintance who disagreed with her on trifling points of belief ; or forgive the depravity that distinguished the wretched inhabitants of her village, though in them, vice was robbed, in a great measure, of its deformity, by being too frequently the offspring of ignorance. Neither could Felicia avoid thinking, as her penetration unwillingly discovered these blots in the character of her new acquaintance, that the frequent mention she made of the gentility and opulence of her friends and associates was little indicative of that deep humility which she sometimes professed to be the ruling

feeling of her soul. In terms which her young visitor thought almost overstrained, she often declared that she "considered all persons upon a par with herself—that the doctrines of Christianity placed the prince and the pauper on terms of equality, and lamented that the pious few were subject to so many slights from the pride of the vain and worldly." Yet scarcely a day passed without some allusion to her high connexions; and many were the histories she revived of her patrician friends, introduced apparently for no other purpose than to prove their intimacy with herself and her family.

The first Sunday Felicia spent at Dursley House, she was labouring under a severe cold; and, fearful of exposing herself, lest she might become seriously indisposed, a misfortune particularly to be dreaded when from home, she begged to be allowed to spend the day in her own apartment. Her reasons for this indulgence were so manifest, it was readily granted, and she consequently remained a stranger to the way in which Mrs. Dursley deemed it right to spend this sacred season of rest and enjoyment. She had now been a member of her household a fortnight, for she became her visitor on the Monday, and with something like curiosity she rose particularly early on the second Sunday she found herself at Dursley House, that she might not only be enabled to unite with the family in their devotions, but ascertain how far they agreed on the so-often-disputed ground of its occupations. After her own private devotions were finished, she descended to the breakfast-room, and, when an hour had elapsed, felt a little impatient for the appearance of the family. Not one of its members, however, interrupted her solitude before the breakfast-bell rung; and she then learnt from Mrs. Dursley, that, as they always sent their servants to church, and attended there themselves, they did not deem it necessary to insist on private prayers in the morning.

Felicia bowed, but made no reply. Already she discovered that they materially disagreed; for though fatigue or inadvertence sometimes obliged her to delay her matin orisons till after breakfast on every other, the seventh was with her so solemn, so peculiar a day, she never omitted rising in time to repeat those longer services which were dedicated to its use; nor could she help thinking this summary mode of clipping off morning prayers augured little real pleasure in the offices of piety.

The entrance of the different branches of the family soon interrupted these reflections; and, after a meal which Mrs. Dursley thought was conducted with pious decorum, because it passed in almost gloomy silence, she was retiring to her room to dress for church, when one of the young men asked where they were all to go.

"To church, to be sure," replied his mother. "You know we never omit our duty."

"But whither will you go this morning—to Mapleton Church

or to Woodley?" asked he. "At one there is to be a famous preacher, and at the other, we have just been informed, there is to be a charity sermon."

Mrs. Dursley looked perplexed. "We will put it to the vote!" she cried, giving at the same time, Felicia thought, undue weight to one side of the question, by observing, that they might never have another opportunity of hearing the celebrated clergyman who was to preach at Mapleton.

The young ladies, however, did not take the hint, for they preferred Woodley, assigning at the same time, as a reason, that it was the nearest. Mr. Dursley vowed he cared not a straw which way the contest was decided. The Doctor united with his mother, when she announced her wish to go to Mapleton; and the two young men, like the Indian kings of prudent renown, expressed their determination of joining the strongest side, which they had little doubt would be their mother's. Felicia was now called upon to give her opinion; and, after much hesitation, she ranked herself on the side of the young ladies, alleging her desire to support the charity sermon preponderated over her inclination to hear the preacher. Felicia had long declined giving her weight to either party, for she was aware she could not gratify both, and might probably excite more displeasure by her decision than she could easily remove: she, therefore, remained neutral, till, finding her resistance to their united entreaties was beginning to give offence, she fairly declared in favour of Woodley, from a conviction that it would be wrong to neglect such an opportunity of doing good to its much neglected poor.

Mrs. Dursley looked discomposured; and Felicia, glad to escape from this scene of contention, retired to her own apartment.

While calmly employed in perusing one of Bishop Porteus's sermons, which she had brought with her, she was summoned into the drawing-room by a servant, who announced from his mistress, that it was time to set off, as the roads were extremely bad, owing to some rain; and, if they were not there early, the clerk or sexton might probably be so impertinent as to put somebody into their pew.

Felicia hastily threw on a shawl, on receiving this information, and joined Mrs. Dursley in the drawing room. The Doctor was her only companion; and during the half hour that elapsed before the young ladies made their appearance, she incessantly, though indirectly, lamented that the argument had not been decided according to her wishes. "The roads were so intolerable — the stiles so inconvenient — the preacher so lukewarm!"

Felicia bore all these back-handed strokes without the smallest self-reproach for the share she had had in subjecting her to this evident mortification. She had not voluntarily given her sentiments; but she felt assured her influence had been thrown in the right scale, and secretly pitying the woman who could thus extract pain from the most trivial events of life, remained almost

uninterested in her remarks, till the Misses Dursley at length arrived. Mrs. Dursley's complaints immediately assumed a more serious aspect; and, after twenty times protesting they should be too late, to which her daughters as often replied, that they should be too soon, the whole party suddenly commenced the walk to Woodley.

The church lay about three quarters of a mile from the house, and as they pursued the path that led to it, various were the opportunities that presented themselves to each party for continuing the subject of the morning's discussion. The Misses Dursley expressed their hopes that there would be a full church, and a good collection; Mrs. Dursley, her conviction that there would be neither, from the known inability of the minister, and the doubts which many persons entertained, as to whether the money so raised was properly applied. Mrs. Dursley continually desired them to quicken their pace, and the Misses Dursley as often wondered at her haste, when every body knew it was earlier than they were ever before accustomed to set off. Next followed an appeal to the watches of every individual present, accompanied by the respective praises of the owners, mingled with the less complimentary remarks of those who had reasons for not liking to abide by their decision. This mutual interchange of civilities was at length terminated by reaching the church; and on entering the door, it was discovered that both parties had indulged unnecessary apprehensions, for they were neither too soon nor too late. The service immediately began; and after a plain, but excellent discourse, they all prepared to return home. The preacher had selected his text from the thirteenth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians; and Felicia had no doubt the strength of his arguments in favour, not merely of alms-giving, but all the other graces included under the head of charity, would have made her friends extremely ashamed of the petulance they had manifested. How, then, was she astonished to find, that the sermon had so little touched their hearts, or affected their consciences, that they were mutually ready to renew the subject in debate the moment they had the opportunity of beginning it.

Mrs. Dursley opened the attack by remarking, they had had a "feeble uninteresting, ineffective discourse—a mere moral dissertation on the duty of giving money to the poor, which she esteemed the least part of charity," and finished it by expressing her conviction that they should have heard a very different discourse had they gone to Mapleton. At a charity sermon the Misses Dursley thought alms-giving the most important topic to dwell upon,—prophesied that there would be a larger collection than usual on such occasions, and avowed their satisfaction at having heard a sermon from which they had derived so much edification. These contending opinions and contrary feelings had hitherto been delivered with tolerable calmness and fashionable politeness; but Mrs. Dursley now being thoroughly exas-

perated, the dialogue assumed a more serious aspect, and bid fair to end in a complete quarrel; when Dr. Dursley, whose passions were much more under control than those of his family, secretly ashamed of Felicia's being the witness to such a scene on their return from church, put an end to it by observing, that he must leave them to visit a patient, but hoped he should be able to eat his *Sunday's* dinner with them. A strong emphasis on Sunday recalled his mother's scattered prudence. She did not feel hurt at her own violence on such a day, but that she had forgotten herself so far as to indulge it before a visitor; and, after darting an angry look at her daughters, who received it with cool, decent, indifferent decorum, she turned to Felicia, and with a faint smile said, "I am afraid we have teased you by this little argument, Miss Leycester. It is impossible the fondest families can always think alike, but we never really disagree. I believe no persons were ever more attached to each other. I don't remember our ever having had a positive quarrel in our whole lives."

Felicia listened with the utmost disgust to this futile attempt to gloss over the violence and irritability they had mutually betrayed: nor could she help thinking that prudential motives and worldly considerations alone conduced to that domestic tranquillity which Mrs. Dursley complimented so highly. The unaffected attachment, the unpretending piety of the Berkelys, appeared yet more conspicuous when contrasted with the assumed sweetness and ostentatious zeal of their neighbours; and as the parting observations of Mrs. Berkely arose to her memory, she felt that she could now fully and entirely acquit her of either prejudice or want of charity.

As Mr. Dursley nodded by the fire, the young ladies yawned over a sermon, and their mother perused a controversial pamphlet, with the ardour of one who seemed to think fire and faggot scarcely an adequate punishment for those who disagreed with her in opinion. Felicia cast a glance into the comfortable drawing-room at Elm Grove, and sighed with almost envy as she saw them sitting by its blazing fire, each cheerfully occupied in perusing some instructive work of practical devotion, or listening to Mr. Berkely, who not unfrequently, after the more solemn duties of the Sabbath were over, read aloud the history of some eminent reformer or exemplary Christian, from whose exalted piety and shining example they endeavoured to derive some personal assistance.

When she reviewed the events of the day on her pillow, she felt still less inclined to admire the principles or conduct of her entertainers. Mrs. Dursley made a great parade of having a cold early dinner that her servants might have the opportunity of going to church, and appeared more surprised than pleased, when she casually mentioned that such was the common custom of the Berkelys. A dark cloud and dusty roads were deemed sufficient apologies for staying at home in the afternoon; and though Mrs.

Dursley read a few extra prayers in the evening, there seemed to be a total want of that life and energy, which she had expected in a family so avowedly under the influence of religious feelings. And she breathed a hearty wish, ere she closed her eyes, that she might not be their guest another week.

She was, however, doomed to disappointment; for the lady to whom Mrs. Berkely's visit of charity was paid, continued extremely ill; and satisfied that Felicia was safely, though she had some doubts as to her being agreeably, situated, Mrs. Berkely acceded to her earnest entreaties that she would remain. Mrs. Berkely also was not unwilling that her young friend should have the opportunity of seeing, that all who make high pretensions to exalted piety, like the proud Pharisees of old, were not entitled to her undoubting confidence—of perceiving the emptiness of that religion, which, consisting in creed only, lays no control on the heart; and allows expressions of charity and good will to become its silver—its gold—and its brass. She knew Mrs. Dursley thoroughly, and she was not sorry that chance had placed it in her power to perceive that something more than mere professions, rigid adherence to trifling forms, and severe strictures on the laxity of others, is necessary to form the Christian character, and adorn the disciples of Christianity.

Another Sunday, neither sanctified by Mosaical strictness nor hallowed by Christian enjoyments, had passed away, and Felicia was beginning to fear it might be the harbinger of another week spent in a wearisome interchange of civilities, with persons whose sentiments were so entirely at variance with her own, when one morning, as she placed herself at the breakfast table, she perceived Mrs. Dursley looked unusually out of temper. Her family, probably, made the same observation, for the meal commenced in almost total silence, and she was secretly contemplating its termination with pleasure, when Mrs. Dursley said, "Pray, my dear, don't linger over that cup of coffee so long; really it is quite fatiguing to sit with the tea-things so long before one."

A side-wind attack on her husband was so decisive a proof of her being disposed to indulge a little ill-humour, that he immediately took the hint, and rising somewhat hastily from his chair, overturned a large glass jug of milk which stood near him. Additionally eager to escape from the impending storm, Mr. Dursley made only two steps in reaching the door, and before a female servant arrived to repair the mischief he had committed, was, happily for himself, out of the reach of his lady's voice.

"Why did you not come before?" exclaimed Mrs. Dursley, in an angry tone, to the young woman as she stooped to wipe the soiled carpet.

"I came the moment I was told, ma'am," said she, without looking at her exasperated interrogator.

"I don't believe it!" cried Mrs. Dursley. "You are so in-

blance to those of a bird on escaping from a cage where it had experienced kind treatment, but where it had wanted the society of its feathered friends, and panted for the blessings of liberty.

CHAP. XXX.

"There is a destiny in this strange world,
Which oft decrees an undesired doom."

As she slowly drove home in the little chair, which Mr. Berkely had ingeniously contrived for the accommodation of his lamented sister, Maria, Felicia could not avoid commenting with great severity on the conduct of the Dursleys, considered as a body, but especially on that of Mrs. Dursley. While perpetually arrogating to themselves a title to superior piety, and inveighing, either by open reproach or silent innuendos against almost all their acquaintance, they fell far, very far, short of that *practical* perfection which distinguished those humble professors who were the objects of their evident contempt. While enjoying every luxury which taste, fashion, or affluence could procure, they were perpetually assigning limited resources, or prudential considerations, as a reason for not bestowing more on the wants of their fellow-creatures, and while hour after hour, day after day, was devoted to music, drawing, ornamental needlework, and morning visits, want of time was the plea advanced for not uniting in those strenuous exertions which the Berkelys were daily making to add to the flock of a Saviour. Their religion, it was evident, did not influence them to restrain their passions, for though they usually made up their differences in a short time, they gave way, when hurt at any trifling provocation or disagreement, to a degree of violence and petulance equally disgraceful and surprising, while their haughty and unfeeling behaviour to their dependants, manifested little of that meek and humble spirit which is essential to a true believer.

"These, alas! are the people who injure the cause of Christianity!" thought Felicia, as these facts passed in mental review before her sight. "It is not those who *scoff* at religion, but those who *degrade* her, that are her bitterest enemies. It is not the laughter of the impious, but the errors of the high professor, which bring Christianity into discredit." Let me then learn to attach myself yet more to *acts*, and not to *words*—to "*sense*, and not to *sound*," lest my religion prove a meteor to deceive, and my professions become "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."

From these reflections, she was startled by hearing her own name pronounced, in the well known tones of Mr. Berkely's voice, and looking hastily round, she saw him by the side of the little pony.

"I fear I have interrupted some very pleasing meditations," said he, "for I had been soliciting your attention some time before you noticed me."

"Indeed you have not," said she, gaily, "I assure you, though grateful for the hospitality I have received since we parted, I am most happy to return."

He sprang into the low chaise, and taking the reins from his servant, told him he might return by a shorter path, and announce they should soon reach the Grove.

"We are not less happy to receive you again," said he. "Since the death of poor Maria, we have never been so cheerful, never so usefully employed. You have given life and energy to our pursuits, and I own I have had some indistinct apprehensions that you might forget us, and——" he hesitated.

"Impossible!" cried Felicia, warmly. "You could not think I should ever be tempted to forget you at Dursley House."

Mr. Berkely looked earnestly at her, and as he marked the glow of mingled surprise and attachment that mantled on her face, while she thus tacitly contrasted his family and that of the Dursleys together, he felt anxious to reveal the secret that had so long laboured at his heart. But ere he could summon resolution to say he loved her, she changed the conversation, and half happy at having the important moment delayed, half sorry at having lost the opportunity so long panted for, he communicated that his brother was the accepted lover of a lady in the neighbourhood. "You have, I doubt not, observed his frequent absences from home, they were occasioned by his wish to be near her, and our silence on this subject has proceeded from our not being quite assured that the lady's friends would consent to their union, for Andrew has only a younger brother's portion, poor fellow, and though an ornament to his profession, as we have little family interest, he has few hopes of obtaining anything very considerable in the church. Since, however, you left us, some arrangements have been mutually entered into, and I believe the marriage will take place in a few months."

What those arrangements were he did not hint, but Felicia, knowing the generosity of his disposition, entertained little doubt he had made some considerable personal sacrifice, and after congratulating him on the approaching event, she casually said she expected to see Mr. Andrew in high spirits.

"You will not be disappointed," replied he. "Andrew is in almost brilliant spirits. I trust, however, and believe, he will not realise the truth of the common assertion, that the life of a lover is the most blissful period of existence, for I cannot acquiesce in its wisdom, and I should be sorry for the lady whose future protector differed from me in opinion. The ardour which attends uncertainty and hope must indeed subside; but will the chastened joys of domestic love be a bad substitute for the tumultuous feelings of passion? As in life dazzling abilities and splendid qua-

lities do not always secure to the possessors either honour or aggrandizement, so I conceive, that the calm serenity, the undisturbed endearments of conjugal affection, may more conduce to real happiness than the impetuous fervours, the unsatisfied hopes, that generally attend the days of courtship."

Felicia felt extremely pleased by these remarks; and when he led her again to the drawing-room, could not help thinking, as her eye glanced round this, his favourite apartment, again enlivened by the cheering glow of a fire blazing in the antique grate, that she, to whom he gave his valuable affections, would have reason to rejoice at her lot; nor could she, when again embraced by his mother and sisters, avoid feeling as if she had once more returned to a home endeared by a temporary absence.

"What a striking instance you are, my dearest mother," said Mr. Berkely, eyeing her with fond admiration, as she drew out her knitting the instant she had finished tea, "of the fallacy of the remark, that advanced life affords no display of even active virtue. You never relax, never indulge the natural propensity of man to be indolent, listless, discontented; and though you are not now, as formerly, called upon to train us, by firm, steady exertions, to the path of duty, you keep us there by your own perseverance. The example is still set us — the lesson is still taught us — by the unchanging vigour with which you pursue the less arduous occupations of increasing years."

"Your estimate of me, my dear John, is drawn rather from affection than justice. I find myself continually erring on the very ground where you compliment me; for time is so valuable, and life so transient, that we can never sufficiently appreciate the inestimable gift — can never be sufficiently anxious, or careful, to spend it as we ought."

In this modest, unaffected reply, her family saw another proof of that merit she so humbly disclaimed; and during the month she had spent with the Dursleys, Felicia felt that she had never received one such lesson of virtue. Mrs. Berkely did not question her as to whether she found her previous sentiments augmented by intimacy, nor did Felicia hint, even to her or Miss Berkely, that she had been disappointed; but her pointed silence explained her sentiments; and in the increased assiduity with which she sought to perform the duties of practical piety and benevolence, Mrs. Berkely saw she had learnt to regard professional piety with more dislike and suspicion.

It was now October; and after writing twice before she obtained any reply, she received a few hurried lines from Rosalind, stating, that they had been in town nearly a fortnight. The letter was shorter than customary, and contained little more than the bare intelligence of their having left Brighton; but a post-script, written in apparently still greater haste, communicated the following important information: — "I forgot to tell you, Evan-

more is in town also; he left Alverstone about a week or ten days ago, and I believe intends spending the winter here."

Felicia scarcely breathed while her eye glanced over this passage; and she felt displeased at Rosalind's mentioning so lightly and casually, a circumstance which she must know would be to her so replete with interest. Her heart throbbing with blended emotions of pleasure, surprise, and uneasiness, she sat down to say in reply, that she should be ready to leave the Grove whenever Lady Wyedale could send the carriage to convey her to Russell Square. When she had despatched this letter, her mind again reverted to the unexpected intelligence she had just received. At first she felt pain lest it should be an additional proof that Evanmore could no longer endure a winter in the country; but this sensation soon gave way to the more pleasing idea, that it might be a sign of his wish to renew their engagement — of his desire to retrieve her good opinion by showing her that, though in the seat of former temptation, he could resist its fascinations. Again her bosom expanded with delight, as she slowly admitted this captivating supposition; and eager to return to town to convince herself of its truth — fearful of being compelled to acknowledge its fallacy, she awaited Lady Wyedale's mandate for her removal from the Grove with painful anxiety. A fortnight, however, passed, yet no summons arrived. She then became impatient, and a thousand apprehensions took place of the hopes she had so lately indulged. Perhaps Lady Wyedale was much worse, or Rosalind herself indisposed. It had not escaped her observation, or regret, that her letters, in defiance of her evident wish to veil her secret feelings, had uniformly been distinguished by a strain of dejection, unlike the thoughtless hilarity of her natural style.

To a secret conviction that Lord Edgermond would never honourably solicit her hand, she had ascribed this great alteration since she left her; and fearful she might be mourning her own imprudence in encouraging such attentions, and his treachery in possessing himself of the affections of one woman, while his vows were plighted to another, she longed yet more to rejoin her, that she might assuage her uneasiness by the balm of sympathy, or divert it, by her assiduous attentions, from dwelling on her mind; or, perhaps, Rosalind, seeing Evanmore was again immersed in those scenes from which she had wished to withdraw him, might not urge Lady Wyedale to send for her, from a fear that her return would be productive of nothing but increased uneasiness and anxiety. Vain, however, were her conjectures or her hopes. Rosalind continued silent; and at length equally astonished, hurt, and alarmed, she wrote to Lady Wyedale, to say, her visit to the Berkelys had been so much prolonged, that though their hospitality inclined them to wish it still lengthened, she really felt there was a degree of indelicacy in remaining longer. She therefore entreated her ladyship would have the goodness to

send for her without further delay, or that, if inconvenient to her to spare the carriage, she would, through the medium of Rosalind, or a servant, authorise her to undertake the journey in the Mail.

This letter will certainly bring a speedy answer, thought Felicia; and trying to dismiss the subject from her thoughts, she entered the drawing-room. Mr. Berkely was there alone. He arose on seeing her, and placed her a chair near the fire.

It was a fine, clear morning; the sun shone cheerfully through the almost naked branches of the trees, and November's varied tints streaked the few remaining leaves that yet lingered on their lofty summits. The windows commanded a view of the village; and though the fragrant bunches of the rose or honeysuckle no longer adorned their white walls, their strawbound roofs, and thin blue smoke curling among the trees that sheltered them from the blasts of winter, possessed many a charm for the eye of taste. Beyond was the church, now more distinctly seen than in summer; and as it stood on a little eminence above the village, it seemed to Felicia's fanciful imagination like a good man standing firm, erect, and glorious, above the grovelling multitude who surrounded him; yet viewing them with pity, and presenting at once an example to guide them to better realms, and a hand to assist them in their progress.

"Might I presume to ask the nature of your meditations?" said Berkely, watching the turn of her expressive features, as she gazed on these lovely objects with the fond lingering attention of one who thinks he is about to be separated from the scene of attraction.

Felicia smiled, and candidly told him the simile she had been drawing. Mr. Berkely again anxiously regarded her, and again wished to solicit her affections; but the diffidence, the timidity of real love, still held him enchained. He believed she had conquered her attachment to Evanmore, but he feared she might not, as yet, feel sufficient indifference towards him to render the addresses of any other agreeable, and he dreaded to lose the interest he had discernment enough to perceive he was making in her heart as a friend, by precipitately declaring himself a lover. Agitated and perplexed, he, therefore, once more relinquished the intention of avowing his attachment; and unconscious of his viewing her with any warmer feelings than those of friendship, Felicia continued, by her artless attentions, to fan the flame she had excited.

The day after she had despatched her letter was dark and gloomy. The hollow gusts of a chill November wind beat the descending rain in torrents against the dusky windows; and, unable to pursue his usual occupations, Mr. Berkely spent the whole of the day with his family.

"Stir the fire, Mary," said he to his sister, when a servant took away the tea equipage; "and let us by increased liveliness

and comfort within, bid defiance to the storm that is raging without."

Miss Berkely complied, and Felicia, taking her work, tried to pay attention to the book Mr. Berkely was reading aloud for their amusement. Vainly, however, did she endeavour to command her wandering thoughts into subjection, and fix them on the beautiful effusions of the elegant and pious Cowper. They reverted again and again to Rosalind—Evanmore—and Lady Wyedale. Once she thought she heard a distant rumbling-sound like that of a carriage, and her heart beat high, as she fancied Lady Wyedale might perhaps send for her without writing. But no; it was only the autumn wind hoarsely rushing through the leafless trees, and the sighing sullen ripple of the turbid lake swelling against its banks.

"William is late to-night," said Mr. Berkely, at length putting down the volume, and examining his watch. "It is nearly nine o'clock; and I always feel impatient for his return from the Post-office on Tuesday evenings, because he brings me the Farmer's Journal."

Felicia raised her head from her work with a sentiment of envy on hearing this complaint. She had noticed with sympathy his solicitude for the return of a messenger, in whose motions she also took so deep an interest; but how different were, it appeared, their feelings. Tranquil and happy, nothing disturbed the even tenor of his thoughts—his wishes were confined to the perusal of a newspaper—while she, the sport of various emotions, was anticipating with feverish anxiety a letter that might confirm her worst apprehensions, or be the precursor of renewed intercourse with one she felt she loved with unabated fervency.

While such were her reflections, the servant arrived, and Felicia eagerly asked if he were the bearer of a letter for her. She was answered in the negative; and Mrs. Berkely, who had perceived her restlessness through the day, with a view to divert her uneasiness, requested, while Mr. Berkely perused the Farmer's Journal which he had opened, she would read aloud the daily paper that accompanied it. Felicia instantly complied; and willing to conceal her mortification, had read with tolerable spirit several paragraphs, when her eye caught one which, in a moment, absorbed every faculty of her soul; and, buried in a wild chaos of contending passions, she remained, her glazed eyes still bent on the words which had thus harrowed up her feelings—her trembling hands still clutching the paper—till Mrs. Berkely, surprised at her silence, looked up from her work, and saw her a stiff and livid monument of death.

"Dear Miss Leycester! Felicia!" she cried, "tell me what is the matter? You terrify me! Speak, I conjure you!"

But Felicia remained silent. An icy bolt had shot through her heart; and, paralysed by agony, she was incapable of soothing the sufferings of any other.

Mr. Berkely sprung forwards; and, scarcely knowing what he did, snatched the paper from her fainting grasp. Her eye still pursued the fatal cause of her anguish; and directed by her almost phrenzied gaze, he instantly saw,

"Yesterday morning, at St. James's Church, Henry Evanmore, Esq., of Alverston, Dorset, to Rosalind, youngest daughter of the late Major Leycester, and niece of Lady Wyedale."

The paper fell from his nerveless fingers; and awakened by the exclamation of astonishment that escaped from his lips, to something like consciousness of those around her, Felicia rose from her chair—staggered towards the door—covered her face with her hands to hide her irrepressible grief, and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

SECOND VOLUME.

CHAPTER I.

"And all that now can soothe the mourner's breast,
Is the high promise of eternal rest."

THE gush of Felicia's tears soon restored her to comparative composure; but she felt faint and sick, when returning memory recalled the event which had thus unexpectedly overwhelmed her with misery and astonishment. The delusions she had so long cherished faded before her eyes; and she saw that her spirits, imperceptibly to herself, had been sustained by the flattering idea that Evanmore still regarded her with personal interest—that though they had parted, in the eye of the world for ever, they might, at some distant period, when he saw the folly and danger of his pursuits, be re-united. The belief, that in the midst of selfish gratification, worldly ambition, and thoughtless levity, she was yet dear to her beloved Rosalind, vanished at the same fatal moment. The pride of the woman, the affections of the heart, were equally pierced by this fatal blow to her happiness; and unable to subdue the first paroxysms of surprise and regret, she threw her arms around Mrs. Berkely, as she hung over her with affectionate sympathy, and in broken accents begged to be allowed to retire to her apartment. Mrs. Berkely pressed her cold hand, and led her from the room in silence.

"Felicia, dear child of my beloved friend," she said, in a low voice, as she stopped at the door of her room, "forget not the instructions of your youth, and even this bitter pang will lose its power to inflict pain."

Felicia wept, and kissed the hand that supported her trembling steps, but she was unable to reply; and her benevolent companion, aware that an overcharged heart finds its best relief in privacy, instantly left her. She was sufficiently acquainted with human nature to know that consolation is vainly administered at the moment of intense suffering; and trusting that the natural good sense and piety of her young friend would soon render her alive to its soothing voice, she quitted her, to mitigate the chagrin which she saw her son also was enduring. Mr. Berkely's feelings were in truth scarcely more enviable than Felicia's. From the

hour he beheld her, he had esteemed her the most interesting woman of his acquaintance; and further intimacy with her sentiments and character strengthened his prepossession in her favour. But she was engaged—and he would as soon have thought of cherishing an attachment towards a married woman, as one solemnly affianced to another. Some little astonishment he had felt at her selection; for he had heard that Mr. Evanmore was more indebted to nature than to education—more distinguished for the graces of person than of mind—that he had, in short, been the spoilt darling of a silly, trifling mother, and he wondered Felicia could have bestowed her affections on such a man. When, however, he was introduced to Mr. Evanmore, in town, he found him so pleasing and gentlemanly, that these unfavourable impressions were totally effaced; he even felt more inclined to be satisfied with her choice, because he had once been unjust enough to question it. Mrs. Berkely, however, by no means saw Mr. Evanmore with his partiality: she admitted him, indeed, to be possessed of many personal advantages, and an open, generous, amiable temper; but she was not unacquainted with the character of his mother, and she perceived a want of firmness in his own decisions, an instability of mind on trifling points, which compelled her to fear his principles were neither sound nor fixed enough to render him a suitable husband for her young friend; and when Felicia, at length, announced that their engagement was dissolved, she felt concern for the present uneasiness she was enduring rather than surprise.

Mr. Berkely's feelings were of a very contrary nature. He was equally surprised, and equally delighted. Felicia had hinted at the cause of their mutual estrangement; and without being vain or presumptuous, he was not entirely ignorant that he possessed claims to the esteem of an amiable woman, nor insensible to the advantages he derived from an honourable name, an ancient family, and a clear unincumbered estate of eighteen hundred a year. He hinted his hopes and wishes to his mother, and from her received every encouragement. Had Felicia not been previously engaged, she felt assured that Mr. Evanmore would have found in Berkely no mean rival. Their sentiments equally harmonised on trivial as well as essential subjects; and when she should have regained her spirits sufficiently to admit the idea of another lover, Mrs. Berkely had little doubt she would become sensible of her son's unassuming merit. In Felicia's gradual restoration to health and spirits, she had seen the accomplishment of their mutual wishes,—in the acuteness of her present grief, the unconquerable distress she betrayed on receiving this unexpected intelligence, she instantly read the secret workings of her heart, the twofold disappointment she had sustained. She felt momentarily mortified herself, but it was only momentarily; and with her usual calmness, she returned to the room where she had left Mr. Berkely a prey to the deepest mortification.

"Ah is over, you find, mother," said he, casting a desponding glance on her face. "How have we been deceived! How the greatness of this disappointment is aggravated by the hopes we idly cherished of success! Felicia will never be mine!"

"I have, indeed, been surprised, and I perceive you are farther from happiness than I had expected; but so far from esteeming your chance of finally winning Miss Leycester in the smallest degree impaired, I believe it is strengthened by this singular event. She will now make a point of banishing Mr. Evanmore from her thoughts; and, aided by a strong understanding and still stronger principles, I have no doubt will ere long succeed. Had he remained unmarried, I am, on the contrary, disposed to believe she would, from that ardent affection which it is evident she has ever felt for him, have been equally unwilling to receive the addresses of any other, and incapable of returning his affection. If, therefore, you feel inclined to continue the pursuit—and I tell you candidly, I deem Felicia Leycester worthy of every exertion you can make to secure her—I still think it by no means a hopeless one."

"Dear mother," said he, a gleam of satisfaction again passing over his features, "when can I ever make you any adequate return for all the kindness, the excellent advice, I have received from you. Yes, I see I have judged rashly; and if I am not precipitate, not impatient, this excellent, this exemplary woman may yet be mine. But——" and he hesitated, a shade again lowering on his brow, "I must be assured she has ceased to love him, ere I could be happy, even with her. I could not bear, when a cloud passed over her features, to think it was produced by attachment to another—could not endure the idea of my wife's contrasting me with a former lover, or shrinking from the name of her sister's husband."

"Whenever Miss Leycester encourages your attentions, or accepts your hand, be assured you will possess her undivided heart. She is superior to the childish fear of dying an old maid, and has too much principle to give her hand when her heart does not accompany the gift. When that period will arrive I can scarcely conjecture, but I own I fear it will not be soon."

"I fear so too," said he dejectedly; and wishing his mother good night, he retired to muse over this unlooked-for interruption to his views.

While such were the visions of Mr. Berkely, Felicia threw herself on the bed, and gave way to the agony that oppressed her. She had suffered one of the severest strokes which perhaps can touch the human heart; and grief and indignation equally struggled for mastery when she thought on the hand by whom it was inflicted.

The name of Rosalind—sister—had seemed to concentrate the whole of her heart after Evanmore's loss; and she wept with un-

utterable anguish when her fancy presented the idea, that she had been deceived by this idolised being—deserted by Evanmore.

But to contemplate betrayal by those we have trusted, is too painful for voluntary endurance: we seek to delude ourselves, that we may mitigate the bitterness of feeling deluded. A pure ingenuous mind also, incapable of deliberate error, is almost unnaturally unsuspicious of others; and Felicia, with mixed sensations of torture and self-reproach, recoiled from branding Rosalind with so foul a crime. "No, Rosalind was incapable of treachery. She was volatile, unthinking, sometimes unfeeling, but hers was a spirit unable to suggest or carry on a regular system of deceit, of hypocrisy. No, she had considered him disengaged, had herself been deceived; and, eager to wipe away the recollection of Lord Edgermond's mockery, had in a paroxysm of disappointed affection and ambition, hastily accepted the offer it was now evident Evanmore had come to town on purpose to make her." Such were the palliations her attachment induced her to offer, as apologies for this hasty step on the part of her sister;—but, while they removed somewhat of the poignancy of her affliction, enough remained for sorrow.

She must now pursue her cheerless course alone; for the pleasure she had contemplated in cherishing Rosalind's children she could never experience. They would be the children of Evanmore, and any partiality expressed for them might unconsciously keep alive her own attachment, and awaken Rosalind's jealousy. It might also induce Evanmore to think he possessed an interest in her heart, an idea not more degrading to herself than, perhaps, dangerous hereafter to the peace of her sister. She was, thenceforth, cut off from all the fond endearments of domestic love. The wreck of happiness was not total till now. She had lost Evanmore, but Rosalind remained. Hope, so slow to quit the human breast, had anchored on her. On her enduring love she counted to pass peacefully, if not blissfully, adown the stream of Time. And she too was gone! Yes, even so—the last drop of bitterness was shed into her cup of sorrow. The marriage of Evanmore and Rosalind had decided her fate. Henceforth she was destined to be a solitary, unheeded, unconnected being in the midst of a busy, happy world. Estranged from them, none could arise to fill the chasm created in her heart! They were her all—and she had lost both—sister and lover. She mourned with the sterile consciousness of almost despair; and, absorbed in grief, remained stretched on the bed till she was roused by hearing the church clock strike two. She started, and perceived her lamp had long sunk in the socket. But she was not environed in darkness; for the moon was high, and its soft rays streaming through the half-closed windows of the room, shed a mild glory on all around. There was something soothing in the stillness of nature, and, softly rising from the bed, she contemplated with increasing calmness the scene before her.

The blue expanse of heaven was studded with millions of glittering stars, and the clear light of an autumnal morning was rendered more lovely by the silvery beams of the moon, as they fell on the varied foliage of the trees, and were reflected on the placid bosom of the lake. A soft and balmy breeze floated over the tops of the trees; but not a leaf moved—not a sound was heard to interrupt the solemn silence, save the low ripple of the lake, whose little waves, curling and sparkling, gently dashed against its mossy banks.

"Why should I be so wretched?" she cried, as she gazed on the majestic moon, walking in silent grandeur, surrounded by all the lesser satellites of heaven. "Why should the joys and griefs of this transitory stage of my existence thus absorb a spirit formed, not for this world, but another? Have I not been taught that *'the soul of one virtuous and religious man is of greater worth and excellency than the sun, and his planets, and all the stars in the world?'*" And shall I lose, in my unavailing regrets at the wreck of my earthly happiness, the remembrance of that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which is prepared for me, if I endure these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, with resignation? No," she pursued, kindling into pious fervour as she spoke, "let me henceforth devote myself to Him who made me. Let me bury, in my preparation for another sphere, the paltry sorrows of this; and death, as the commencement of a new and more glorious existence, will not be to me a messenger of dread—but a consummation of every hope, of every happiness—the harbinger of brighter scenes—the guide to eternal joys."

She folded her hands in silent prayer; and the calm serenity of the Christian temper diffusing itself over her bosom, she threw herself on the bed, and soon lost in sleep the remembrance of her griefs.

With the morning, the parting words of Mrs. Berkely arose to her memory, and taking from her bosom the portrait of her aunt, she imprinted upon it a kiss of attachment. It was the faithful image of one whose countenance she had never seen but with reverential love and joy. With it was associated the best feelings of her heart, the remembrance of consolation under her infantile sorrows, of protection, of kindness; and when she felt her mind fluctuate, or her spirits decline, she had been accustomed to revive each by contemplating its placid beauties. It had been painted at her own request only a few years before; and, in the saint-like expression of its fair features, in the calm subdued spirit of its beaming eye, in the silvery hair that shaded its tranquil yet intelligent brow, and matron-like dress that set off the remains of former loveliness, she saw again the guardian of her infancy, the guide of her riper youth. "Dear aunt," she had said, "let me have a portrait of you, and it will be an antidote

■ See Dr. Bentley's Sermons, at Boyle's Lect. No. 8.

against the pernicious maxims of society—my consolation under sorrow; and as you were my instructor in youth, you will continue to be my companion in age." Her petition, and the fond acquiescence of Mrs. Beauclerc, suddenly occurred to her memory. Never before had she felt herself more powerfully affected, and again pressing it to her lips, as she recollected her last parting admonition, she exclaimed, "Yes, I will remember thy instructions: no earthly love shall engross the best affections of my soul. I will so live, that I may meet thee again."

As she registered this solemn vow, she recalled Mrs. Beauclerc's practical lessons on patience, fortitude, and forgiveness; and the remembrance of her virtues, though low in her silent grave, rose with the freshness of a summer's dawn over her drooping spirits—shedding its brightness, like a sunny ray, amid the gloom of a dark and lowering sky. Tears streamed over her face, yet they were no longer those of despair, but of tenderness; and as she still gazed on the miniature, her memory involuntarily presented the beautiful lines of her favourite author, Cowper:—

" Oh, that those lips had language ! Life has passed
With me but roughly, since I heard thee last.
Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see,
The same, that oft in childhood solaced me;
Voice only falls, else how distinct they say,
' Grieve not, my child, chase all thy fears away ! ' "

She had scarcely finished repeating these stanzas, when the first breakfast-bell rung. The Berkelys were a family of early risers, and as they were frequently differently engaged, the bell sounded a quarter of an hour before breakfast, to summon them together. She started; and placing the portrait again in her bosom, sought to efface from her eyes the trace of tears. Pale, yet composed, she then descended to the breakfast parlour. But when she reached the door, half ashamed of meeting Mr. Berkely, after betraying so unequivocally her wounded affection, she lingered with her hand on the lock till it was suddenly forced from her grasp, and Mr. Berkely himself appeared. He was leaving the room; and unconscious of her being on its threshold, met her with a degree of embarrassment that increased her own. After a confused apology, he led her to the breakfast table, and Mrs. Berkely, pitying their mutual uneasiness, endeavoured to introduce some interesting topic that might chase the remembrance of the evening's adventure. They each felt her delicate address, and after a few efforts became more at ease; but still Felicia did not dare to raise her downcast eyes; and Mr. Berkely saw, in the silent mournfulness of her looks, broken answers, and pallid countenance, how great were her internal struggles.

Mrs. Berkely had intended addressing her, but she was so much more recovered from the shock than she expected, that she deemed it more wise not to revive so painful a topic. In defiance, however, of both her exertions and Felicia's the day was heavily

spent ; and when evening again closed in, each felt apprehensive of what it would produce. "Would Lady Wyedale write, or Rosalind ? or—but no—it was impossible—Evanmore could not be capable of thus adding insult to injury. Their engagement had indeed been dissolved, but it was in consequence of his vacillation,—a vacillation she had now too much reason to fear was the result of a growing attachment to her sister." Burning tears of shame and grief and mortification again rushed into her eyes as these reflections presented themselves to her mind ; and fearful of betraying fresh emotion should she receive any intelligence on so agonising a subject, she formed an excuse for retiring to her room, that she might at least give way to it unseen. Her anticipations were not unfounded, for the return of Mr. Berkely's servant from the neighbouring market-town brought her two letters, one from Lady Wyedale, the other from Rosalind herself ; and, with that trembling eagerness with which we seek to ascertain the worst, she hastily tore open the letter of her sister. It was apparently written in haste, but seemed the production of a gay, happy heart, and ran as follows :—

CHAP. II.

"Of chance or change, oh ! let not man complain,
Else, shall he never, never cease to wall."

"My dearest Felicia,—I fear you have, ere this, deemed me very unkind in so long delaying to reply to your many affectionate letters and inquiries, as to when you were to return to town. But the fact is, that I have lately been so vastly taken up with my own affairs, I have had small leisure to attend to those of even my dear Philly. Knowing too, how happily she was situated, I had fewer scruples of conscience in seeming to neglect her. I have now to communicate a most important, unexpected piece of intelligence—one that will be more than a nine days' wonder, and it is, that I am—married—Yes, my dear, I am absolutely *bonâ fide* married, and strange—incredible as it may appear—to your discarded lover—Evanmore!!—And now for the key to this seemingly unaccountable mystery.—On my return from Brighton, galled, incensed, and out of love with all the world, I found the poor man just arrived from the country in exactly the same enviable frame of mind. We renewed the friendship which existed between us during the last winter.

"And oft he did beguile me of my time,
When he did speak of the distressful stroke
His youth had suffered. His story being done,
I gave him for his pains a world of sighs:
And swore—'In faith,' 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;
'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful;

And wished I had not heard it ; yet I wished
 That Heaven had made me such a man :
 — Upon this hint he spake :
 He loved me for the pity I had shown him ;
 And I loved him, because he was so gentle and so fond.'

"We were both free from former trammels, having on this occasion followed the advice of the canny Scot, who says,—

" ' It is well to be merry and wise,
 It is well to be prudent and true,
 It is well to be off with the old love
 Before you are on with the new.'

"Finally, to end this recapitulation of the causes that produced such an effect, we agreed to lose the remembrance of all other mortifications in each other's condolence.

"As it would have evinced a gross want of judgment, or knowledge of character, to expect that Lady Wyedale would countenance our loves, we saved her the risk of bursting a blood-vessel in her attempts to rescue us from ruin, and spared our own ears and feelings the many charming, gratifying things which we were aware her *affection* would induce her to address to them, by not communicating the circumstance at all. As I am not quite of age, we were married by banns, which I agree with Lydia Languish in thinking a most degrading way of entering the pale of honourable matrimony ; but when it can be entered in no other way, and people are in a hurry, must be submitted to, however *à contre-cœur*. I am afraid I have left a bad character behind me with the parson and clerk ; for I neither fainted nor wept, which all modest ladies have done from time immemorial. Evanmore, perhaps, to atone for my deficiency, seemed inclined to do both. Though, however, I have too much native honesty to turn my wedding into *une comédie larmoyante*, for the sake of my character, I preserved appearances so far as to look very grave, and did not forget to give either a pretty shudder, as I approached the altar, or to write my name for the last time in a very tremulous hand. Still I fear, notwithstanding, I shall be thought to have behaved very ill. I know I ought to have assumed great terror, by way of showing virgin delicacy and maidenly timidity ; but I have such a natural antipathy to *pretence*, whether manifested in the form of mock-modesty, affected sanctity, insidious candour, or surreptitious wisdom, that, however requisite for my situation to play off all such absurd grimaces, I could not for my life have practised them. We are now on our road to Bath, where we intend spending the winter, and are alone. I did not wish to take any bridemaids with us to report our felicity, for we are not always the wisest when we are the happiest ; and Evanmore, though he once thought it would have been better to have a companion, is so thoroughly good tempered, that he easily resigned the point to my better judgment. Do not, however, let this influence your decision, when you are in a similar situation, should you fancy it decorous or agreeable to have these usual

appendages to a wedding. Berkely and yourself, like some celebrated woman, whose name I have forgotten, will, I am sure, be full as deserving of having it recorded on your tombstones that you never said a word too much or too little in your lives. You see I am already anticipating a brother, and in a sort of quondam admirer of my own too. Really, there is something singular in our destiny! I have married your cast-away; and you, without any piscatory effort, will, I doubt not, secure the cautious cunning fish for whom I once laid so many ineffectual nets and snares. Well, all that I can say is, Man, man, thou art a marvellous animal! So leaving you, my dear Philly, to moralize *en philosophe* on the mutations of human life, I proceed to say, I have left a few lines for Lady Wyedale behind me—their effect I can't foresee—Evanmore has strong hopes of their success, and builds them upon her former attachment to me; but I am by no means so sanguine. You, I am sure, will do all you can to assuage the violence of the storm; and at all events I hope you will continue to keep off tall cousin James, as should Evanmore and I come to beggary, which I esteem by no means improbable, I know you will preserve us, if in your power, from starving, for '*auld acquaintance sake*.'—With every wish for your happiness, my dearest Philly, in which Evanmore sincerely joins, I must now draw this hasty letter to a conclusion; and as all is over with poor Rosalind Leycester, and she is fairly transformed into that awful, important personage, a married woman, I must subscribe myself

"Your attached and obliged sister,

"ROSALIND EVANMORE."

"Rosalind Evanmore!" repeated Felicia. And as her eye glanced over the words, again the same faint sensation she had felt when first the intelligence of this strange marriage reached her, crept over her fainting frame. "Rosalind Evanmore! This pang might have been spared me. She need not have signed her name thus ostentatiously—initials would have done. At such a moment to insult me with parodies on a play, and indelicate allusions to Mr. Berkely! she who witnessed my anguish when I parted from him!"

Her pale cheek flushing with unwonted resentment, she tossed the letter on the table, and indulged for some hours the bitter sorrow that swelled her heart to breaking. When this burst of mingled indignation and grief subsided, painful curiosity took its place, and she re-read the letter so full of galling interest with most intense attention—pondering and weighing every word. Evanmore had, it appeared from Rosalind's own confession, come to town to seek a reconciliation with her. "She had neither fainted nor wept" when they stood together at the altar—he "seemed inclined to do both;" he was then no triumphant joyous bridegroom. How her heart throbbed at the idea! Had she not

prolonged her visit to the Berkelys might their engagement have been renewed? Was he not most probably prepared to meet her wishes?" These whisperings of unextinguished affection were at length silenced by the sober voice of reason. "How could she possibly hope to reclaim one so wavering in principle—so fickle in his attachments?" And then she tried to be glad that the delusion, which she now discovered she had been nourishing almost unconsciously, was so soon dispelled by his faithlessness. But vainly she endeavoured to reconcile her mind to his having become the husband of Rosalind. Even when she should have conquered her unwillingness to see and meet him, she could never be on those familiar terms with him which she ought to be with the husband of a sister. She should fear that any little trifling act of kindness to his children, or personal civility to him, might be misconstrued by himself, his wife, or the world. And when she reflected on Rosalind's boundless extravagance, refined taste, and high spirit, she dreaded what might be the result of that hasty improvident connection into which vanity and folly mutually led them. Evanmore had not fulfilled the fair promise of his youth—had fallen short of that steady perseverance in the narrow path which, so early in life, he had voluntarily entered; but still she knew he had strong instinctive perceptions of right and wrong—a desire to fulfil his duties, though he too much wished to unite them with his pleasures; great delicacy of mind and manners; natural prudence, and an almost reprehensible dread of incurring the censure of the world.

Rosalind, on the contrary, though she was gay, generous, and good-humoured, was utterly destitute of any real feeling of piety—had no idea she was sent into this world to do more than please herself; and though, she believed, pure in thought, was not certainly distinguished by that nice sense of decorum which is one of the first bulwarks of female virtue. The opinion of the world was equally her ridicule and contempt, at least that part of it whose sentiments he would be most inclined to respect. And when to these retrospections was subjoined a secret persuasion that Lady Wyedale would never be induced to pardon this act of disobedience and imprudence, she felt so apprehensive of the consequence of this strange step, that pity for them usurped the keenness of her own disappointment.

It was long before she could summon resolution to open Lady Wyedale's letter. She was aware the contents would be scarcely less painful to herself than the Evanmores. "*The Evanmores!*" she started as the phrase presented itself to her fancy, and hastily sought in its perusal a refuge from the sudden pang she had received. Lady Wyedale's letter exceeded her gloomiest anticipations. It was a wild chaos of mingled rage, mortification, lamentations, and denunciations. In one passage she accused Rosalind of having deluded Evanmore by her arts and coquetry; in the next, poured out the bitterest maledictions against him, as the

destroyer of Rosalind's brilliant prospects. Every epithet that inventive ingenuity could suggest, or malice apply, was in short heaped on both; and though her letter was a longer one than she had known her write before, little more could be made out of its unconnected sentences and passionate exclamations, than that she would never see, or forgive either again; and wished Felicia would leave the Grove immediately. A postscript to this frantic ebullition of an ungoverned mind, informed Felicia, that the carriage would reach Elm Grove the next morning to convey her to town; and communicated that it would sooner have been sent, had not the artful wretch, who had alienated the affections of Evanmore from her, omitted to communicate that it was her desire to return to London as soon as they left Brighton.

To this accusation Felicia paid little attention. She thought it, indeed, probable Rosalind might not wish to hasten her from Elm Grove at such a period; but she had her own reasons for believing her ladyship would have been in no hurry to comply with her wishes had Rosalind remained unmarried; and while she feared Rosalind's desire to eclipse all the world had made her too anxious to secure Evanmore's admiration, she felt that it would be unjust to ascribe to her the whole of his estrangement. He had, indeed, been exposed to temptation, perhaps more in her society than he could ever have been subjected to in any other, but his conduct had evinced he was unable to withstand it. Their parting scene at Leominster rose full to her memory; how had he feared, how had he warned her against those fascinations which had proved too strong for his own fortitude. She heaved a deep sigh as she was reminded by this circumstance of the change in his sentiments and feelings, and clasping her hands, fervently implored that, with so strong a proof of the frailty and weakness of the human heart before her, she might not, like Evanmore, be too confident in her own strength.

Anxious to give the Berkelys the earliest intimation of her approaching departure, and regain that character for delicacy and resignation, which her late conduct, she feared, had forfeited, she returned to the drawing-room, and announced that Lady Wyedale's carriage would reach the Grove the next morning.

The Berkelys received the information with more regret than surprise. They had been expecting to lose her; and in Lady Wyedale's desire to see her without the smallest delay, they anticipated a great and favourable change in her situation.

"I fear she will never pardon this silly termination of all the dashing Rosalind's flirtations," said Mr. Berkely, when she left them for the night.

"I am apprehensive she will not," replied his mother. "And more, that having most probably determined to adopt Felicia, instead of her late imprudent darling, she will expect her to form some very exalted connection."

"As to that," replied Mr. Berkely, "Felicia will not consider

fortune. Could I ever be so happy as to secure an interest in her favour, I should not regard her ladyship, I must acknowledge."

"But Felicia might," observed his mother. "She has a strong sense of what is due to Lady Wyedale, as her father's sister; and though disinterested to the highest degree, might not choose openly to oppose so near a relative, especially since now indebted to her for a home, and as her ladyship has received so ungrateful a return from her sister."

"I fear, indeed," said Mr. Berkely, "there are many impediments to our union; but I cannot endure to resign her image altogether."

"Let it not, however, too much engross you, my dear John," said his mother, affectionately, "lest this unforeseen obstacle, together with the severity of Miss Leycester's disappointment, may render a failure more acute."

Mr. Berkely promised acquiescence; but he was already sincerely in love; his attachment had lately been suffered to acquire force from a hope of its gratification; and, as his reason assented to the wisdom of his mother's caution, his heart grew scarcely less a prey to dejection than Felicia's.

Soon after breakfast, Lady Wyedale's travelling carriage arrived. The servants had travelled, by her orders, almost the whole of the night; and in this impatience to see her, Mr. Berkely saw a confirmation of his mother's apprehensions.

Felicia's parting with the Berkelys cost her many tears: if they had not supplied the void left in her heart made by Evanmore's loss, they had, by their kindness, good sense, and unvarying cheerfulness, relieved her mind of half the weight of sorrow with which it was oppressed when she first visited them. They had subsequently drawn fresh bonds of love around her heart; and the idea of being separated from a family so endeared, so esteemed, was no light augmentation of her present affliction. Her adieus were given in a voice choked by unaffected sorrow; and when the carriage at length drove from the venerable portico, and her weeping friends vanished from her aching sight, she felt a revival of that sad hour when she quitted the calm seclusion, the untroubled happiness of Leominster, to enter into a stormy and deceitful world.

When she found herself at the extremity of the old avenue, and the carriage gained a little eminence, she desired the postillion to stop, and letting down the glasses, looked wistfully back. It was no longer that gay and smiling scene over which her delighted eye had wandered with eager pleasure when first it rose to her gaze—the balmy softness of spring was gone—the village streamlet lay bound in icy fetters; and the brilliant verdure of its grassy lawns and vales, so lately sparkling in the dews of summer, were faded to a dusky hue. Yet the morning was fine, clear, and frosty; and on the broad chain of the grey-topped hills the faint rays of a winter's sun threw aslant a bright cold

gleam. But the leafless trees, the calm blue ether, unsullied by a single cloud, the short broken cadence of the robin, as, perched on a lofty bough, he warbled his sweet yet melancholy notes, announced the death of another year.

Winter is often a scene of social happiness and cheerful amusement; but its approach can seldom be seen without awakening, in the contemplative bosom, emotions of rather a mournful than a joyous description. It is the decline of another of those brief periods that mark the flight of time; and in the withered leaves—the naked branches—the faded flowrets—and mournful stillness of the birds—the decay of nature—the dissolution of man is strikingly and awfully portrayed.

As these reflections presented themselves to Felicia, she viewed the residence of her friends. Its ample grounds stretching to the lake; its ancient front unadorned, yet majestic; its characteristic situation unpretending and sheltered; its darkling woods stripped of their summer foliage, but enlivened by the deep green shining leaves of the ivy, the rich scarlet berries of the holly and hawthorn; and its light column of thin blue smoke ascending from its hospitable roof, had never possessed more interest in her eyes: and she felt it was just what it ought to be, the abode of a family not more distinguished for local importance, than internal worth.

"Winter has robbed them of many charms," she thought; "but enough remains to render it the most lovely spot in the world. And to them winter can convey no mournful images, no desponding ideas. It is, indeed, a signal of approaching decay, but they can witness it without apprehension: they can anticipate the beauties of the spring—they can see in it a symbol of that more perfect scene of happiness, of which death is the preparation, the forerunner. Oh! that it may be so to me! that I may acquire fortitude to overcome the grief that now chains me to the earth, and feel the tranquil joy of those whose hopes lie not here, but in a better land."

At Lady Wyedale's request she travelled with great expedition; and fatigued, dejected, and alarmed, at the anticipation of her meeting with her aunt, she at length reached Portman Square. It was late at night; and when the bustling idleness of her numerous domestics, and glaring light of the profusion of lamps scattered about the house met her dazzled sight, she cast another retrospective glance of regret at the quiet scene of comfort she had quitted.

Lady Wyedale's reception was such as she expected,—bursts of passion, shrieks of hysteric violence, protestations of eternal resentment, mixed with tears of rage, regret, and shame. She enumerated every instance of her former kindness to Rosalind, the money she had spent on her education, the anxiety she had felt to see her splendidly established.

Even the passions themselves may be increased by the strength of the language in which they are clothed, and as she proceeded

in her recapitulation, her violence grew momentarily more terrific.

Felicia listened to these transports of mortification and indignation with silent sorrow. She saw in them too sure a prognostic of future evil to the Evanmores; and when she learnt, in one of Lady Wyedale's intervals of reasonable conversation, that Rosalind, in addition to an allowance of one hundred pounds per annum, and the interest arising from Mrs. Beauclerc's legacy, had contracted debts to the amount of nearly two hundred pounds, she retired to her room to weep, not for herself, but them.

CHAP. III.

"For there are griefs, that sufferers hide,
And there are griefs that men display with pride;
But there are other griefs that, so we feel,
We care not to display them, nor conceal." CRABBE.

THE first hour Felicia could snatch from Lady Wyedale, and the many visitors who called to welcome her to town, with all the friendliness and warmth that greets a reputed heiress, was devoted to writing a letter to Rosalind.

The severest sorrows are those which our pride or our situation compels us to hide from every eye; and though we may openly repel their violence, their intensity is heightened by the necessity of their concealment.

It was not a more bitter trial to her feelings, than a difficult exercise of her ingenuity; and after fruitlessly endeavouring to congratulate her on her marriage, she thought it more ingenuous, and more consistent with her own feelings and character, simply to wish her joy; assure her of her sincere desire to see her reconciled to Lady Wyedale, and her earnest exertions to promote so desirable an end; but she held out no hopes of its accomplishment. She suppressed everything likely to exasperate either, but she would have deemed it cruel and wrong to permit them to encourage a delusion, that might lead Rosalind into expenses which Evanmore's limited fortune could not supply.

Having fulfilled this painful task, she was in hopes that a change of scene and diversity of company would gradually lead to that alteration of ideas which was so necessary to her happiness. Vainly, however, she tried to banish this heavy calamity from her memory. Lady Wyedale seemed to have no pleasure in any other topic, and as often as Felicia found means to avoid the subject, she ingeniously discovered methods of reviving it.

Her ladyship admitted, like many others, that the well-being of society depends on the acquiescence of the whole mass of mankind in general laws enacted for their government; and that

virtue, honour, goodness, submission, were necessary to preserve the harmony of the world. But she had no idea of rules without exceptions; and when her own passions were concerned, or her interest required such a variation, always deemed it perfectly innocent to make them bend in favour of self. While, therefore, she was a warm advocate for subordination in the lower orders, and obedience in young persons, the duty she owed as a wife to her husband she deemed one of those maxims from which she might deviate without the least error or impropriety. Nothing consequently excited more displeasure on the present occasion than Rosalind's disobedience. Her shameful want of duty, of gratitude, of proper respect to her nearest relation, in thus marrying without her consent, was the incessant theme of her animadversion. Not contented with her own abjuration of the erring pair, she was exasperated at Felicia's not uniting in the eternal hostility she resolved to maintain towards them; and partly with a view to induce her to join in the league of hatred, partly to gratify her desire to torment, she was continually ascribing Evanmore's alienation from Felicia to Rosalind's artifices. Every former word, every previous look, was construed into a proof of the truth of this accusation; and that which was evidently the result of hasty imprudence, was rendered more criminal by being tortured into a system of deep-laid treachery.

Weary of this incessant subject, and aware of its hidden intention, Felicia sought to relieve herself from its persecution by openly and fairly stating her belief, that though Rosalind had contributed to Evanmore's estrangement, it was undesigned; and that her union with him was the rash act of indeliberate folly.

Lady Wyedale heard her with indignation, and endeavoured, by every means in her power, to effect an alteration in her opinions. Fruitless was every effort to evade or elude the argument: her ladyship renewed the charge; and day after day, the same rhetoric or raillery was employed to convince or sneer her out of sentiments that she had, on the preceding, endeavoured to escape or defend.

How much more difficult it is to bear the weaknesses than the vices of our neighbours; to see faults dignified with the name of virtues, and resentment, anger, and impatience, ascribed to disinterested, amiable motives, are trials which all have probably felt, though few could exactly define the nature of their sufferings under them.

Felicia was hourly doomed to hear Lady Wyedale's dislike to the Evanmores traced in great measure to their behaviour to herself; and her great virtue—*forbearance*—was never kept in more constant exercise than now, when depressed spirits united to a secret sense of injury and acute disappointment, rendered her so much less able to meet such attacks; for her ladyship possessed all the little trifling, tormenting, ingenious arts of annoyance, which of all others are so hard to be endured with patience;

and, enraged at Felicia's want of congeniality on this favourite point, never felt easy excepting when thus employed.

"Perhaps my sister may have been more to blame than my attachment to her inclines me to believe," said she, one day, worn out by this incessant recurrence to the same debate; "but even if she is, you know, my dear aunt, we must forgive as we hope to be forgiven, and dwelling on injuries does not diminish their weight."

"She most assuredly is much more criminal than you choose to admit," was the reply. "Though I am sensible Mr. Evanmore is a vain, weak young man, and could never have been sincerely attached to you, or he would not so soon have fallen a sacrifice to her manœuvres, that does not render her conduct less atrocious. To destroy the affection between a sister and her almost husband—to put her charms in competition with those of so near a relative—one who loved her so dearly—to induce a man, so long and solemnly engaged, to desert an only sister! Oh, it is almost incredible, infamous, cruel! You may forgive it, but I affect not to be above human nature, I can never pardon such behaviour. Those are happier whose feelings and sensibility are less acute. It is well you are endowed with so much stoical apathy; one less gifted would sink under such an accumulation of wrongs."

"Fortitude is not apathy," said Felicia, goaded to agony. "It is not divested of feeling in all its complicated shapes of misery: it only strives to hide its woes—to bear its loss with resignation. And I cannot help saying that, if your ladyship would spare me any further comments on this dreadful subject, you would do more to heal those sufferings you so much deplore, than I can describe, or you conceive."

Lady Wyedale was "astonished at this unexpected turn to the conversation. In her own house, she had no notion of being dictated to. She had, indeed, felt great pity for her, but she had been almost equally ill-used, and it was natural to give vent to her wounded feelings." Then followed a recapitulation of the benefits she had conferred on Rosalind, the injuries received in return, and fresh attempts to convince Felicia she owed Evanmore's indifference solely to her sister. Lady Wyedale's arguments were always backed by the suggestions of a fierce spirit; personal insult mingled with her replies to an antagonist, and she wept or raved, as her eloquence excited the different passions of rage, grief, or resentment in her own breast; and Felicia, eager for peace, at length tacitly acquiesced in all she advanced.

It would have been happy, indeed, for Felicia, had she possessed any portion, however small, of that large share of stoicism with which Lady Wyedale so politely endowed her, for it was long, very long, in defiance of all her struggles, ere she could gain fortitude to reflect on Rosalind and Evanmore with the calmness she had hourly tried to acquire since they became so strangely united. Bitter was the attempt to tear from the heart

the image of one who had so long reigned its master, and not less bitter the idea that Rosalind, she whose name, whose beauty, had never been heard or seen without joy and admiration, had silently inflicted this heavy blow.

Felicia's noble mind sought to dismiss from her memory, as unworthy of attention, the accusations of Lady Wyedale, but they had been delivered with so much plausibility, and persisted in with so much pertinacity, that they preserved their station; and while she continued to acquit Rosalind of intentionally injuring her, she felt that she had ever been too careless of wounding her peace — felt that corroding pang which a fond confiding heart sustains on seeing itself deceived where most it trusted. Hers were peculiar sorrows: in the outset of life, every floweret by which its rugged path is usually strown seemed blighted; every attachment which could gladden her heart dissolved. No tie of kindred or affection remained to bless or cheer her future days on this side the grave. But she had never lived for this world alone, and when her sinking spirit turned from the dark shadows that environed her present abode, the brightness of her future one seemed more dazzling by the reverse. Still the feelings of the woman on sustaining such an affliction, mingling with the stings of feminine pride, at times overpowered the resignation of the Christian, and slowly and heavily passed the day now devoted to the discharge of duties, or spent in occupations which had lost their relish in the poignancy of her grief. But their want of interest influenced her not a moment to neglect them. "I have now done with the pleasures of the word," she said, "and ought yet more assiduously to fulfil its obligations."

But though earthly grief may darken, it cannot extinguish the brightness of a soul elevated by Felicia's views, nor will sorrow long be the guest of those who strenuously endeavour to shake off its absorbing power. Felicia's progress towards serenity was slow, but gradual; not perceptible, but sure: and, as when our situation in life is fixed for ever, the mind can no longer be painfully alive to the tumultuous throbbings of hope or fear, she began in a few months to think the calm quietude of her destiny not intolerable, if divested of happiness. Her taste for her former pleasures returned more slowly, but it did return; and when she first perceived herself taking an interest in the progress of three little girls, to whom she was imparting a portion of her attainments, she hailed it with joy, as a symptom that her existence would not be so miserable as she had imagined.

And such is the certain result of those exertions to which we are impelled by a sense of duty. They are painful in perspective, and irksome in performance, but their accomplishment is crowned with internal peace, and their remembrance is grateful to the mind, when all others shall cease to give it pleasure.

Her young *protégées* were distant relations of Jenny's. They had no mother, and as Jenny expressed it, "such poor, lost,

sliving, little ignorant, petted creatures, she feared they would come to no good," that she undertook to give them a little instruction in reading, writing, and needlework, during the three hours which her early habits secured her, before Lady Wyedale required her personal attention. This act of benevolence, entered upon at first with almost disgust, and excited by no other motives than a desire to perform a deed of kindness, and a wish to banish reflection from her own bosom by some fixed employment, soon brought its blessing along with it. Her little pupils in a few weeks shook off their fears, embarrassments, and reserve: learnt to gaze on the splendid apartment, which during the first days of their pupilage entirely engrossed their faculties, with indifference: forgot their instructress was a great lady, and incited by her smiles and promises, soon made so rapid a progress in their humble studies, that she began to consider the hours she passed with them even as a season of pleasure. Their kind relation, Mrs. Jenny, as they never omitted to call her, was an object of much more secret respect than their young preceptress; and Felicia, aware of Jenny's disposition to usurp a little brief authority, could sometimes scarcely help smiling when her unexpected appearance silenced in a moment the heedless joy, or "long loud laugh sincere," which she had been previously making some ineffectual attempts to repress.

Jenny was, indeed, one of those rather officious, teasing personages, who think it impossible to lecture children sufficiently, and believe nothing can be properly done without much effort and much talking.

"Nothing could be kinder than Miss Felicia was, in bestowing so much learning and time on the little Mortons; but she was sadly afraid she would let them get the upper hand of her. Young folks cou'dn't be kept too strict everybody knew that knew anything, and as often as she went into her dressing room she never heard her speaking sharp to them. Certainly it was her marvel how they got on as they did, for even little idle Sally could say all her catechism without missing a word, and sew quite tidily, yet Miss Felicia never seemed to keep them no ways tight to it. They always looked cheerful, and since into the house they had been, never e'er a one of the three had cried a single wink. How it could be was past her comprehension!"

The housekeeper, and, what was more gratifying, Lady Wyedale's own woman assented to the wisdom of these comments; and, with a view to supply the deficiency of her mistress's system, she took care to omit no opportunity of schooling her little relations herself.

Jenny's situation was so much ameliorated by the departure of Miss Juliana, who followed her mistress's fortune, that she could not participate in the mortification which she had quickness enough to perceive, in spite of her efforts at concealment, Felicia felt on the marriage of her late lover. She was gratified by the

certainly that it had rendered her the heiress of her aunt. Even before that astounding event, it had been settled in the conclave daily assembled in the servants' hall that Mr. Evanmore was no match for any niece of my lady's. His own man confessed "there was no still-room at Alverston — nor any butler kept;" that master did not come in for all till missus's death, and, besides, that old ladies did live monstrously long; this one might reach the age of Methusalem, she was so brisk and hearty. Taking all this into account, she could not sympathise in Miss Felicia's grief, "though it was very aggravating to be thus ousted of one's sweetheart by one's own nat'ral sister. So she hoped the poor young lady would soon get over it — the squire was, to be sure, a niste looking young gentleman, but she must think he was rather soft as well as false-hearted to change her mistress for such a fly-be-sky as Miss Rosalind; and that some day he'd find out she had a reason for taking up with him he didn't know of now."

Perhaps, so mixed are the motives of the best of beings, self-interest and mortified pride had a larger share in the regret and indignation Jenny had once felt at Rosalind's coquetry and its consequences, than she had the smallest idea of. While, indeed, we are thus imperfect, it would be somewhat cruel and impolitic to probe too deeply into the feelings of those who profess to love or compassionate us, or investigate too minutely what weight may be thrown into the scale by personal considerations. We are happier in being deceived by those we esteem, than we should be if we could penetrate into the recesses of their hearts, and see contempt for our faults struggling for mastery over attachment to our persons and admiration of our virtues, or if our own affection were destroyed by perceiving both give way to overwhelming regard for themselves.

"I shan't be very, very sorry, indeed, when Mrs. Jenny's lover takes her to the church to be married," said one of her little cousins, in a whisper to her sister, just after she had been giving them a more than usually sharp reprimand on the impropriety, ungentility, and ingratitude of their behaviour, in neglecting to curtesy to the porter, when he opened them the door. Felicia felt herself colour with surprise at this observation met her ear; but unwilling to encourage the thoughtless garrulity of childhood on such a subject, she continued her work without appearing to have heard it. She could not, however, dismiss it from her memory, and the more she reflected on the extraordinary information it conveyed, the more she felt inclined to believe it was not without foundation. She had noticed, that Jenny had lately become remarkably demure, silent, and precise. She had, in short, carried herself like one who felt her own consequence increased; and several times had seemingly endeavoured to begin some topic, to which she attached great importance; but unsuspecting that this change was produced by anything but the

absence of her rival, and fearful she might wish to offer some indiscreet condolence on her sister's behaviour, she had not attended to the one, and made a point of avoiding the other. It now struck her that Jenny might have some communication to make relative to her own affairs; and when she dismissed her young acquaintance, she went into her room, determined to give Jenny the opportunity of unburthening her mind if she chose.

Jenny was working by the fire; and ere she had lingered in the room many minutes, after divers hums and haws, two or three little short coughs, and as many alterations of her attitude, Jenny announced that she had something of great consequence to reveal.

Prepared by the loquacity of little Sally for this awful communication, Felicia desired she would reveal what she wished without hesitation. But that was not in Jenny's power; she was on the eve of betraying she did not intend to live a life of single blessedness, and it was too important a piece of intelligence to be lightly mentioned. She hung down her head, and made many beginnings before she summoned courage, amid deep blushes, to say that she had accepted the addresses of "a very *farantly*, steady, industrious young man; come of creditable parents, well to do for, and likely to make a very honest livelihood."

Felicia offered her sincere congratulations, though something like a feeling of increased dejection stole over her spirits; and then inquired more particularly into the history and circumstances of her lover. The accounts she received of the former were highly satisfactory; but, on investigation, the latter did not appear so flourishing as Jenny insinuated. He was one of a large family, and though seemingly industrious and economical, he was only a journeyman carpenter. Felicia, therefore, earnestly recommended their waiting till each had accumulated something more than they now possessed.

Jenny declared her perfect willingness to remain as she was, but hinted that she was *afraid* Mr. Samuel Burton would never consent to wait any great while.

"If he has either a grain of sense, or prudence, he will, without reluctance," said Felicia.

Jenny eagerly assured her he was possessed of a large share of each.

"Then he will, I am sure, cheerfully accede to a measure so evidently the result of both, and so demonstrative of real affection for you. Were you now to marry, you would, in all human probability, be distressed during the residue of your lives; and by waiting for two or three years, you may almost secure affluence. Whenever you marry, if you marry as you ought, I will give twenty pounds, in addition to the twenty left you by my aunt: that sum, with your own savings, will ere long accumulate to a hundred; and till he has acquired a similar degree of independ-

ence, he has no right to require you to become his wife. When you shall, between you, have gained two hundred pounds, you may then, perhaps, be able to embark in some small concern yourselves; or, at all events, it will enable you to begin the world with credit and respectability. Require him to vest all he can deduct from his necessary expenditure, in a savings bank, curtailing all your own little wants, that you may increase your personal fund, and set him an example of self-denying prudence. You have a right to press him on this point," pursued Felicia, perceiving Jenny held down her head, she thought, as if doubtfully, "for you have already saved so considerable a sum out of your wages, you are justly entitled to his respect and attention."

Jenny's head dropped still more on her breast, and she stood so irresolute, so seemingly confused and distressed, that Felicia was again on the point of renewing her compliments, when she said, "Indeed, indeed, Miss Felicia, I am afraid, indeed, not; I can say no great matters to him there—I am sadly vexed as it has so happened, but—I am sorely afraid you'll—but—I was over-persuaded. And, and I've drawn out almost all my money."

"Drawn out the money you placed in the savings bank!" said Felicia, in a tone of astonishment and concern.

"Yes, more's the pity;" and she seemed relieved by this confession of her folly.

"And what have you done with so large a sum?" asked Felicia, half angrily.

"I feared you'd be vexed at the time," said Jenny; "but I was over-persuaded to do as others did, and so I loosed it to buy me a cloth pelisse for the winter, and a silk spencer for the last summer, and a new straw bonnet, for my tother was too old to turn; and they all said, I looked like nobody else in it, with its small poke and high crown; and a niste gownd or two, with a few laced caps, run away with all the brass I'd been slaving for so long." Felicia could not repress her mortification or displeasure. "I was unprepared for this," she at length said. "So often as I have warned you not to encourage a foolish propensity to dress beyond your station, and told you your present respectability and future independence rested on your attention to my advice. You might have been importuned; but you ought not to have yielded to entreaties, which your better judgment told you proceeded from no real desire to consult your welfare."

Tears of shame rushed into Jenny's eyes. She had never experienced from Felicia so severe a reprimand; and she stood in silent humble grief, while Felicia proceeded to desire she would let this instance of foolish imprudence be a lesson to her in future.

"You have lost a great opportunity of evincing your prudence and good sense to your lover," she continued, "by suffering yourself to be thus overcome." Jenny gave an audible sob. "But, perhaps, good may, as is often the case, arise out of evil. You will, no doubt, for the future, be more strictly, rigidly eco-

nomical than you need have been, had you not dissipated so much money in improper finery ; and never let it escape your memory, that the plainer you dress the more you will be respected — the more your husband's credit will be preserved ; nor fancy he will love you the less, because he sees you not tricked out in clothes unfit for you. On the contrary, if really a man of worth and sense, he will esteem and love you yet more for a forbearance and self-denial so manifestly intended to promote his welfare, and that of your children. Be neat — beautifully neat — and clean ; but never gaudily, never expensively attired."

Jenny curtsied, and promised implicit obedience. She had been much struck by advice so evidently intended merely for her own benefit ; and, as she pinned up her finery in an old table-cloth, she cast a sigh of heartfelt regret after the guineas so improvidently expended to procure it. Her lover was, as she had represented him, prudent and sensible. He was readily made to see the wisdom of Felicia's advice ; and, after pressing their union just warmly enough to keep up his character as an adorer, he quietly consented to wait two years for the fair hand of his Jenny.

CHAP. IV.

" Oh ! mark you yon pair, in the sunshine of youth,
Love twined round their childhood his flow'rs as they grew ;
They flourish awhile in the season of truth,
Till chilled by the Winter of love's last adieu."

In defiance of his own wish, and his mother's endeavours, to banish Felicia from his remembrance, Evanmore felt her loss weigh on his spirits. The Miss Vernons, the Miss Blackstones, Miss Leonora Caroline Desmond, and many other Misses, were vainly invited to Alverston, to remove that sensation of solitariness which he often complained pressed on his heart. His mother's arguments succeeded in rendering him satisfied with himself ; still he lamented that Felicia would never be his — never enliven the solitude of Alverston. Weary of himself, and anxious to dissipate these regrets, he resolved to take a considerable part of his estate into his own hands ; and, after some little reluctance, his mother consented to the arrangement. She was sorry to see him so dejected ; and, hoping employment might dispel his uneasiness, she observed, that, " certainly, farming one's own land and another person's, made a wide difference in the situation of the cultivator. Farming was now a very fashionable amusement among country gentlemen. Her friend, Sir Henry Greenman, and her particular acquaintance, Mr. Oldacre, both men of immense fortune and high consideration, each farmed a part of their property ; and when a man did *nothing* himself but

just ride round the farm and direct his bailiff, there could be nothing degrading in it, she trusted. But she entreated he would never do a single thing himself, under any circumstances; hoped he would not expose himself too much to the sun, or neglect to wear his gloves; and above all things she conjured him to form no acquaintance with farmers — gentlemen farmers in particular, for they had no station — were a sort of amphibious excrescence, belonging neither to genteel nor simple; and wherever the line could not be drawn with distinctness, it was always dangerous to associate. She could assure him, low society was infinitely more expensive than high; and she should be perfectly shocked, after all the pains and trouble she had taken to keep up a genteel acquaintance, to see him the companion of such people. There was Mr. Topman — no doubt a very respectable man, and very rich, but unknown to a single fashionable family — would probably find some pretext for calling upon him after he knew he had began to manage a part of his estate. And Mrs. Lamb and her four daughters, who lived only two miles off, and carried on the farm under Lord Ellesmere, where Mr. Lamb had realised, some people said, almost thirty thousand pounds during the last war; very pretty, well-behaved, well-dressed women, but no society for them: she should be miserable to see a young man, who had all his life visited in the first circles, acquainted with the people who *rented* under persons with whom she was on terms of equality. Besides, it would, perhaps, injure them in the estimation of their neighbours; and that, after preserving for forty years a footing of equality, would, she must confess, be more than she could bear."

Evanmore hastened to remove these apprehensions, by assuring her he had not the smallest intention of converting Mr. Topman into a friend, should he make those advances she feared; or of seeking among any of the Miss Lambs for a substitute for Felicia Leycester. His mother professed herself satisfied — and thus cautioned, Evanmore commenced the rural occupation of farming. But his taste for the glittering enjoyments of fashionable life rendered him entirely unfit for such primitive pleasures and pursuits. He soon began to find the merely riding over his grounds productive of neither amusement nor advantage. The dread of losing his caste in society made him apprehensive of taking such a part in the management of his estate, as alone would render it interesting: in addition to which, he had acquired a habit of sitting up and rising late, that rendered his rides of little importance when undertaken. His ignorance, inattention, and easy credulity were soon apparent to his bailiff and labourers; and after keeping his farm in his own possession about three quarters of a year, glad to escape so troublesome and expensive a concern, he resigned it to a neighbouring farmer, and retired several hundred pounds poorer, fully convinced that farming is the worst

speculation in the whole world, and with heartfelt sensations of pity for the unlucky fellow who succeeded him.

Winter had just set in. Alverston, naturally a solitary, lonely place, now appeared an almost desert. The earth had lost its beautiful verdure, the plantations were stripped of their many-coloured foliage, and the blasts of the north bent their waving trunks. He looked through the hazy windows, and contemplated the naked trees, the brown plashy fields, drooping faded flowers, and heavy atmosphere, with feelings of disgust. The birds were mute; and he listened to the howling of the wind, the sullen murmuring of the swollen streams, the rocking of the trees, and the pattering of the rain—with a shivering sensation of almost terror. His fancy reverted to the illuminated theatre, dazzling ball-room, and the fascinations which are to be met with in the glittering regions of the metropolis; and he felt his present situation so irksome by the reverse, that he mentally determined he would not brave the Siberian rigours of a winter at Alverston. But how to accomplish this favourite project he could not well imagine. He could not go alone to London without his motive being either supposed to arise from a wish to solicit Felicia's hand once more, or an inability to pass a winter in the country, and both of these surmises it was his wish not to countenance; for he did intend to try the effect of warm protestations of continued attachment on Felicia's heart, backed by the promise of relinquishing all public places at her request; yet shrunk from the idea of seeming to go expressly for the purpose, lest he should experience a repulse; and, till he had had an opportunity of declaring himself, was unwilling she should suppose he came to partake of those amusements which she so much disapproved.

Evanmore could not, or his mind had become so perverted he would not, see, that Felicia did not condemn public amusements until they were pursued with an avidity that was calculated to embarrass the fortune, unsettle the habits, or undermine the principles of those who partook of them. He admitted, indeed, that it was wrong to indulge in them to an excess that might be injurious to the fortune; but he was too faithful a disciple to the easy, flexible creed of his captivating mistress, Rosalind, to allow that, under any circumstances, they could be dangerous to the mind.

Hardly knowing how to compass his intended project, he casually asked his mother if she would like a visit to town. His mother caught at the idea; for a journey is a treat of all others delightful to an indolent person of a restless lively temper.

"Nothing would give her so much pleasure. She had never been to London since poor Mr. Evanmore's death. She should have the opportunity of hearing Kean and Miss O'Neil, and she should like to hear them before she died, and see Waterloo Bridge." Even the Wax-work, Westminster Abbey, the Tower (lions and all), though seen half-a-dozen times before, she decided would be

worth seeing again. Finally, as it is seldom people cannot assign some reason, besides the real one, if they are bent upon carrying some favourite point, "she should be so glad to consult a celebrated oculist, for latterly her eyes had become very weak, so much so, she could see nothing by candle-light but cards; and as she could not imagine the cause, she thought it quite necessary to have some advice respecting them."

Evanmore could have suggested the probable reason of their dimness, but he was too fond of his mother, and too amiably disposed, ever to inflict a moment's pain on any one: and though he had no doubt a pair of spectacles was all she required, he forbore to hint so unpolite a suspicion. Neither was he sorry to have such a plea for undertaking a journey to town, and, a few days after this conversation, they quitted Alverston for London.

On their arrival, Evanmore took a genteel house in Lower Grosvenor Street, and with a beating heart prepared for an interview with Felicia. He had mounted the steps, and stood with the rapper in his hand, when the door suddenly opened, and Rosalind appeared. She saw him with evident surprise and pleasure, and as she was equipped for a walk, he readily obtained permission to join her. He learnt, in answer to his embarrassed inquiries relative to Felicia, that she was at Elm Grove, where she had spent the whole of the summer, and though Rosalind said nothing, his knowledge of Mr. Berkely's character immediately damped the hopes he had encouraged of the success of his expedition. When he had so far conquered his chagrin as to observe his companion, it struck him that she looked more thoughtful, though as beautiful as ever. He mentioned that his mother was in town, and without hesitation Rosalind acceded to his request that she would call upon her.

Mrs. Evanmore was not more gratified by this attention, than delighted with Rosalind's beauty, fashionable deportment, elegant dress, and vivacity.

"I don't wonder at your indifference to our Alverston acquaintance," said she, when he returned, after escorting Rosalind home. "Well may Lady Wyedale be so fond of her. So beautiful, so lively! You would not find Alverston dull if you could prevail on Lady Wyedale's heiress to marry you, Henry."

Evanmore merely smiled. His mother's speculations in that quarter appeared to him quite as well founded as those of Alnaschar, the Persian glass-man, and, hurt at the ill-success of his scheme, he no longer felt desirous of remaining in town. He hinted his wishes to his mother, who heard them with surprise and concern.

"She had not been in London for twenty years: it would look so odd to go for a week, and come back again, without seeing a single play, or going once to the Opera. Besides, she had had no opportunity of consulting an oculist, and her eyes, she could assure him, grew daily weaker."

Evanmore loved her too sincerely to press what seemed evidently disagreeable, and as he took a melancholy stroll in the Park, he once more met Rosalind. She was going to the theatre in the evening, and there, without much solicitation, he was prevailed upon by his mother to join her.

His apprehensions that Felicia either was receiving, or would receive, the addresses of Berkely, were confirmed during this meeting. Rosalind's unwillingness to speak of her sister, or to strengthen the hopes he indirectly expressed of their re-union, struck a chill to his heart, and trying to smother his uneasiness, lest he might appear in the degrading light of a desponding, deserted swain, he exerted himself so successfully, that Rosalind thought he had never been half so agreeable. She was just then labouring under the pressure of a most severe and mortifying stroke of fortune. Again, a season at Brighton served to convince her, that after all her stratagems and hopes, and all his lordship's innuendos, hints, whispers, sighs, and compliments, she must relinquish the idea of securing the fickle possessor of the gilded coronet she so much panted to call her own. The moment he found himself under the cognisance of his family, and the companion of Lady Charlotte, his former distance was resumed, or, at least, he became so cautious, so shy of committing himself by word, look, or gesture, that, blinded as she was by self-love and secret affection, she could no longer remain ignorant of his meaning. Her pride took the alarm, and determined to let him see she was not disposed to carry on a farce, merely intended to give him *éclat* among his fashionable associates, or awaken the jealousy of Lady Charlotte Edgermond, to whom he now paid open attentions, she contrived to give him what is called the cut direct, and, in a tumult of mortification and blasted ambition, soon afterwards accompanied Lady Wyedale to town.

Her ladyship proved a still less agreeable companion than usual; for she was herself provoked at the total failure of these schemes of aggrandisement: and incensed at her peevishness, weary of her childish complainings, Rosalind wished she had not so precipitately resigned Mr. Osborne.

Love, hatred, rage, and revenge may each be conquered or deadened by years or events: but there is one passion over which time has no control, which no vicissitudes can change—it flourishes alike in youth and in age—in prosperity and in adversity—it is equally the companion of solitude and society—its demands are unceasing, yet its power is commonly unfelt—and this potent tyrant is Vanity! For this malady of the mind there is but one heavenly medicine—with that Rosalind was as unacquainted as with her disease. To her, neglect and insult were more dreadful than death; and, astonished at the inefficacy of her beauty, she scarcely cared to look in the glittering mirrors which she began to think must have deceived and deluded her.

She was in this frame of mind, when, the day after her arrival, she encountered Evanmore.

There was something so gratifying in his gentle attentions, so soothing to her wounded pride in the evident admiration with which he viewed her, that she soon saw him with increased regard. She more than half fancied he had left Alverston to solicit a renewal of his engagement with Felicia; but he did not state such was his intention, and she felt happy that he had confined himself to hints. Felicia, she had no doubt, would come back the affianced wife of John Berkely, or, at least, would have had her religious prejudices so strengthened by her long intercourse with his family, as to render their separation final. Pitying, therefore, the disappointment to which he would be doomed on her return, and assured that Felicia was much happier at Elm Grove, she did not urge Lady Wyedale to hasten her back to town; and, indifferent whether she ever saw her again, her ladyship never alluded to the subject. But though these were the first motives of her silence, they did not long continue to be her only ones. Her disappointment with regard to Lord Edgermond was pretty well known among her acquaintance; and as her behaviour to Mr. Osborne had been widely circulated, she found herself on her return a star of diminished glory. Rosalind had penetration enough to perceive, and shrewdness sufficient to conjecture, the cause of this humiliating change, but neither temper nor prudence to wait till this partial eclipse should be withdrawn. Evanmore, the handsome, fashionable, good-tempered Evanmore, was her daily, almost hourly companion; for he had seized the opportunity of an accidental *rencontre* with Lady Wyedale to resume his visits to the house; and disappointed, dejected, discontented, half alarmed lest she should, as Lady Wyedale often obligingly hinted, have flirted and coquetted till she had lost all chance of forming an eligible connection, she began, though at first without scarcely knowing what she intended, to find pleasure in the idea of his forgetting, at the shrine of her beauty, the allegiance he had so long vowed to her sister.

The growing complacency with which she received his attentions, did not escape the penetration of his mother, who gave to every word and look its more than weight; and though Evanmore long persisted in laughing at her prophesies and interpretations, his self-love was greatly flattered by the idea that Rosalind Leycester saw him with so much regard as to awaken such suspicions in his mother's bosom; and he gradually began to believe, if he had only possessed a sufficient fortune, perhaps he might not have been rejected. There was in this reflection so much to gratify his feelings, and assuage the pain he had received from Felicia's relinquishment of his hand, that it unconsciously gained ground; and after a month passed in her society, or spent in listening to his mother's flatteries, he no longer continued to think

the fair Rosalind so entirely unattainable. Still he had not the smallest intention of soliciting her hand. Felicia was unmarried, — might not be engaged to Mr. Berkely; and though she had given him up, it was, as she herself declared, a bitter sacrifice to a scrupulous sense of duty. Rosalind also was so expensive and so thoughtless; though he esteemed her the most bewitching creature in the universe, he could not but see that a connection with her, unsanctioned by the approbation of Lady Wyedale, would be a most imprudent step on both sides. "If she were a little less dashing—when it was ascertained beyond a doubt that Felicia had accepted Mr. Berkely—and there appeared a chance that Lady Wyedale might be brought to consent to his addresses—why then, possibly, he should begin to think of her seriously."

The town is soon surrendered after the besieged begin to prepare terms of capitulation, and resistance is commonly faint after the mind wishes to deem it unnecessary. Increasing intimacy with Rosalind rendered this contest between his secret inclinations to call so beautiful a woman his own, and the whisperings of prudence so painful, that he at length tried to believe it needless. His mother was for ever expressing her conviction that Lady Wyedale would never, could never, discard so sweet a creature, one whom she had brought up as a daughter; and finally, in a fit of unguarded admiration, he made an impromptu offer of his hand, and was accepted.

The joy of his mother, and the sudden alteration of sentiments which followed this change in his situation, left him no leisure to reflect on what he had done.

Rosalind frankly avowed she felt convinced Lady Wyedale would never give her consent, or probably pardon them for marrying without it. But he had now passed the river which admits of no return, even had he wished it, which was far from being the case; for there was a something so gratifying in the idea, that she was willing to risk sixty or seventy thousand pounds for his sake, that he felt yet more charmed with her, and disposed to carry off the valuable prize. Rosalind was not quite of age; and, as his mother feared if Lady Wyedale heard of their engagement, she might take measures to prevent their union, she urged him to press for an early day. The "lax sides of his intention" thus spurred on, he entreated Rosalind would permit him to publish banns of marriage in the parish of which he and his mother were now members, situate at some distance from Portman Square. Rosalind readily consented, for the style of Felicia's last letter convinced her she would soon be in town; and uniting her impatience to leave Elm Grove, to the information she had given of Evanmore's residence in London, she began to waver in her belief that she had transferred her affections to Mr. Berkely. A sensation of mingled shame, regret, and remorse passed over her heart as this reflection presented itself to her imagination. But retreat, she persuaded herself, was impracticable. Her wedding

clothes were secretly ordered. "It would be cruel to disappoint Evanmore a second time. The least surmise of such a circumstance would overwhelm her with disgrace and contempt." A few struggles between the silent reproaches of conscience, and the louder clamours of self fixed her decision, and she hurried on the preparations for her intended union.

To vivacity, intelligence, and manners peculiarly insinuating, Rosalind added great natural goodness of disposition; but she was sudden and violent in her attachments and dislikes, and rash in her resolves: while early indulgence rendered her alike impatient of contradiction, and unable to control the impetuous passions by which she was swayed. But these were not the only sources to which might be traced the hasty imprudence of the extraordinary step she was about to take. Her ruling foible threw its gigantic weight into the scale. She should triumph over Felicia—yet by Rosalind was this motive utterly unsuspected. She felt a sincerer regard for her than she cherished for any other, and believed she loved her more devotedly than she did; for she was not aware how much the conviction that Felicia was her willing inferior on those points which she most prized, contributed to the affection she bore her. She knew too that Felicia dearly loved and admired her; and we all feel an instinctive gratitude towards those who see us with such sentiments, which, till we are called upon to sacrifice some darling object to their interest, we improperly esteem love.

Still, though there are few passions so destructive to the kindly feelings of human nature, or that so effectually indurate the heart and close the door to improvement, as vanity, she found it difficult to satisfy herself that she was right. Felicia's tenderness, her disinterested attachment to herself, the tears she had shed the morning they parted, and the bitter agony she betrayed, when; thrown on her bosom, she revealed that Evanmore was lost to her, seemed to arise in judgment against her. Once she half determined to draw back, or at least acquaint Felicia with the design. But while thus wavering, a box of millinery interrupted her reverie. She opened it, and the sight of a superb white satin pelisse, a magnificent lace veil, and the rich Indian muslin robe profusely trimmed with costly mechin, in which she intended to become a wife, fixed her resolves.

"It was quite nonsensical to give way to all these gloomy thoughts. Felicia had rejected Evanmore because he liked public places: he remained unaltered—Why then should she imagine that they would be united were they to meet again? or that she was acting a dishonourable part by her sister, in marrying a man of whom she did not think sufficiently highly to continue her engagement? Besides, she was sure Mr. Berkely liked her, and only waited for the positive dissolution of her love affair with Evanmore to declare himself, and that would be a far more eligible connection in every respect. They held the same puri-

tanical opinions, and his house and fortune were much better. Oh! it was quite ridiculous, just like poor Felicia, always making stumbling-blocks for herself, and fearing she was doing something wrong."

Her bridal habiliments were carefully transferred to her drawers—the love of admiration, the desire of revenge, the voice of mortified pride, stifled the pleadings of her heart; and, forgetful of her sister's claims, she consented to become the wife of Evanmore on the ensuing day.

CHAP. V.

"Oh, married love, thy bard shall own,
When two congenial hearts unite,
Thy golden chains inlaid with down,
Thy Lamp with heaven's own splendor bright.
But if no radiant star of love,
Oh! Hymen, smile on thy fair rite,
Thy chains a wretched weight shall prove,
Thy Lamp a sad sepulchral light."

LANGHORNE.

THE sun shone bright on the morning that made Rosalind Lecheester a wife. Her maid stole softly into her room, and while dressing for the ceremony, her white satin pelisse, her lace veil, and her richly decorated robe, alternately possessed equal and undivided attention. But when this important duty was over, and the cautious rap of the chairman announced that all was ready, she felt she knew not what—a strange emotion—was it fear of Lady Wyedale's resentment, or Felicia's anguish?—She paused. "Mr. Evanmore is below, ma'am," said the obsequious Juliana, "so impatient!"

Rosalind advanced a step—her eye glanced to the door of Lady Wyedale's apartment, and again she stopped.

There is a something inexpressibly affecting in leaving, perhaps for ever, the house which has sheltered our infancy: we then forget every little sorrow or disappointment, while each pleasure rises to remembrance decked in those lovely mellow tints, in which the mind fondly arrays the scene of past delight. Even Rosalind felt its impression—all was still—no bridal bustle—no bridal magnificence—no bridal greetings met her ear—and the silence smote cold on her heart. How often had Felicia fondly said, "I will dress my Rosalind on her wedding day." No Felicia was there—would she—could she have been present on such an occasion. Once more she drew back. As she shrunk with an inexplicable sensation from the door, she caught a glimpse of the snowy feathers that adorned her satin hat: she turned instinctively to the glass which had so often reflected her charms, and as she saw the graceful plumes that waved over her ivory brow, she forgot that she was leaving the mansion.

of Lady Wyedale—was resigning her birthright—was wedding the lover of her sister!

In the pride of beauty—in the pomp of bridal habiliments, she went gaily forwards, and without apprehension sealed her destiny: for she had not learnt to look through the long vista of life, and contemplate that period when the glories of the bride must be exchanged for the duties of the wife.

Evanmore and Rosalind were equally unacquainted with Bath, and willing to be far from London till the first bursts of Lady Wyedale's indignation, and the astonishment of their acquaintance, were assuaged, there they directed their steps. The season had just commenced, and the fascinating stolen bride of Evanmore became the reigning toast, the belle, the star of the place. The volatile Rosalind, and her admiring husband, were alike intoxicated by this incense; but the brightest day must close, and when the white walls of Bath became so hot the atmosphere resembled that of a stove, and one by one, all her beaux, rivals, and friends, dropped off, she yielded to his wish, and accompanied him to Alverston.

Mrs. Evanmore received them with delight; and for some weeks his paternal mansion was a scene of visiting and happiness. His mother was the gayest of the gay. She was never weary of exhibiting her beautiful daughter-in-law, ready to join in any of their amusements, and always prepared to make a third in Evanmore's phaeton. She had all the restless activity of a person possessed of good health and a lively mind, conscious she had nothing in the world to do but enjoy herself; and at first Rosalind was delighted with her good-humour, and freedom from the stiff preciseness of an old woman. Ere, however, she had been at Alverston two months, she began to grow a little weary of her being so incessantly the companion of Evanmore and her self. If Evanmore proposed driving her over his estate, she was "ready to go with them." If he asked her to walk to see some picturesque view, she "would join them in their stroll: she had seen it a hundred times before, but she should like to see it again." They were invited to a little ball in the neighbourhood, and as the party was formed for the sole purpose of dancing, she received no invitation; but "she would go; she was so intimate, she would not stand on the punctilio of being formally invited; she longed to see Rosalind waltz."

And, proud of her lovely, high-born daughter, and elegant son, she adhered to them through the evening with a faithfulness equalled only by that of the needle to the loadstone. At the ball, a little excursion to visit a celebrated Danish encampment, about six miles from Alverston, was proposed and carried. In order to see the country round to the greatest advantage, and to prevent the party from being separated, it was proposed that they should

all ride there; and as some of the young ladies were not accustomed to horse exercise, it was agreed that they should go on donkeys, each under the guidance of a gentleman. Mrs. Evanmore was captivated with the idea. She "should be delighted with such a sweet rural expedition. She had not, to be sure, for many years, mounted either a horse or an ass, but then Henry would lead her donkey, and it would give her so much pleasure to go with her children."

Evanmore was not quite sure that his mother would not have been better at home, but still, if she would derive so much happiness from accompanying them, he thought she ought by all means to be their associate. A donkey was, therefore, procured for her, and in high spirits they all set off.

The ride there was delightful: the brisk gales of spring had given way to the genial glow of early summer: thousands of the loveliest flowers shed on the scented air their sweet perfume. The lark soared on the azure vault of heaven; and, delighted with the splendour and loveliness of the scene, the little party scarcely seemed to touch the earth. The laugh, the playful *badinage* of that halcyon period, when all is jocund mirth and fearless happiness, echoed through the clear ether; and when they reached the bourne of expectation, the gay group dismounted, and turning the asses and horses wild on the plain, dispersed themselves in pairs, *trios*, and *quartettes*, as best suited their inclination. It was now for the first time Evanmore felt decidedly sure his mother was a little out of her element. She of course attached herself to Rosalind and him, and being unable to walk so fast as her youthful companions, they were compelled to see their associates sporting at a distance.

Mrs. Evanmore, however, appeared so perfectly unconscious that her society was any impediment to their happiness, that he could not endure to undeceive her; and, after requesting Rosalind, whose ill-disguised disgust he plainly perceived, to leave them, he endeavoured to derive all the amusement now in his power, from watching the movements of his scattered friends.

After having passed several hours on the plain, and partaken of some refreshments, brought in small baskets, slung to the gentlemen's horses, they proposed returning. The young ladies were soon mounted; but some little difficulty was experienced in placing Mrs. Evanmore on her *Rosinante*; for though she had all the life and spirit of sixteen, nearly half a century added to that age had somewhat diminished her personal agility. The point was, however, at length achieved, and half the party scampered off, when a new obstacle presented itself to retard her progress—the donkey refused to proceed. Evanmore, always inclined to try fair measures before he had recourse to any other, patted him, coaxed him, whistled to him, advised him, and finally attempted to lead him; but without effect. The donkey was equally insensible to his endearments, encouragements, and expostulations. A little

provoked at this resistance to his will, he had now recourse to his whip, and threatened greater severity. Still the donkey remained immovable. A dark cloud hovering over the plain rendered this unlucky fit of obstinacy particularly unpleasant, and with some energy Evanmore applied his whip to his sides. But no—the donkey would not stir. Evanmore grew warm, and proceeded with considerable wrath from one experiment to another: all in vain—smooth measures and rough were alike ineffective. He lifted up his legs as he felt the lash, and, by an ominous movement of the back, once or twice intimated something like an intention of releasing himself from his burthen; but he did not advance an inch beyond the place where he first became rebellious. He had, in short, got a heavier load on his shoulders than he could conveniently carry; and, like the elephant, who refuses to attempt what he knows he cannot perform, he resolved to brave out the opposition he had announced. In addition to the uneasiness he endured at this unexpected and most inconvenient impediment to their return, Evanmore felt there was something ridiculous in this scene; and when their respect for him could not at length prevent his lively companions from bursting into repeated peals of laughter, as they watched the progress of the contest, it required all his self-command to control his mortification at being thus foiled by a jack-ass, from adding to their merriment.

From the contemplation of his fruitless efforts, and the donkey's sturdy resistance to them, they were roused by increasing signals of a terrible storm, and without ceremony they galloped off. Rosalind lingered behind; but she soon grew so impatient, that Evanmore, alarmed at the threatening aspect of the sky, urged her to proceed alone towards their companions, while he endeavoured to seat his mother on his own horse. She complied; but very unwillingly, for her young acquaintance were now so far off, she entertained few hopes of reaching them. To mount his mother on his high hunter was a work of time, and had scarcely been accomplished before the storm broke over their heads. They were in the midst of a wide plain, unsheltered by a single tree or shrub, and their only plan was evidently to make the best of their way home. But to anything like speed, a thousand obstacles presented themselves. Mrs. Evanmore, terrified at her situation on his spirited hunter, uttered loud exclamations every time he moved beyond the pace of a snail; and though Evanmore endeavored her to calm her agitation, assured her if she remained quiet, she had nothing to fear, and patiently led the animal through the deluging rain without a comment, she felt her seat so insecure, and knew the fiery disposition of his horse so well, that all his assurances were useless. To increase her distress, at one time the high overhanging bushes of the hedges, which bounded a narrow lane through which they were passing, tore away her lace veil: at another, she lost, by a sudden bound of the hunter,

one of her shoes. The branches of the trees she was compelled in her progress to ride under, frequently brushed her face, and a remorseless gust of wind blew off her bonnet into a pool of stagnant water, from which Evanmore, with one hand grasping the reins, and the other leading the untoward donkey, could not even attempt to rescue it. Still the measure of her misfortunes was not complete. A bramble bush, stronger and less supple than his fellows, resented the blow he received as she passed him, by fastening on a large branch of redundant ringlets, curled by the renowned Mr. Ross of Bishopsgate Street himself, and the next spring of the hunter made him master of his prey. A scream doubly afflictive from the plundered Mrs. Evanmore fixed Evanmore's attention; and, looking up in alarm, he saw the recreant tresses dangling from the bush. Too delicate and too humane to seem conscious of this dire injury, he averted his face, on which, in spite of their troubles, he felt a rising smile, and the curls, waving like malefactors who had received the "terrible behests of the law," were left to their fate. Meanwhile the storm raged with unabated fury; hail and rain mingled fell in torrents, and in ten minutes both were wet to the skin. Evanmore bore these calamities with unshaken sweetness of temper; but his mother, tired, frightened, cold, and mortified, grew momentarily more miserable; and by the time they at length reached Alverston, worn out with lamentations and disasters, she was so exhausted, she vented her distress in tears, and was obliged to be carried to her room.

Rosalind had got home three hours before they arrived; but she also had been caught in the rain, and, unable to overtake the party, who naturally increased their speed as they saw the coming storm, had been obliged to ride the whole of the way alone. She by no means wished Mrs. Evanmore should have joined the party; and, inexpressibly provoked at what had occurred, became completely of opinion, that, if old women could find amusement in reading their Bible, and knitting by the fire, it would be very wrong and very imprudent in their children to thwart such enjoyments.

Her displeasure at the unlucky termination of the day's adventures was fully shared by Evanmore. The donkey's resistance was, unluckily, just the thing to strike a mind like hers so imbued with a sense of the ridiculous; and she indulged her propensity without scruple. She was a bold and skilful equestrian, and rode a fine spirited animal proud of his lovely burthen. She curvetted and pranced round and round the hapless pair, dying with laughter at every fresh indication of rebellion on the part of the donkey, quite heedless, till contrary feelings were induced by the pelting storm, that two of the performers in the pantomime were her husband and his mother. For the first time Evanmore found the merriment of his vivacious wife out of place, and was angry at her want of respect both for his mother and the conventionalities of

society. "It might be very harmless to quiz other people, but his own mother—that was quite another thing."

A severe cold was the sole after-inconvenience Evanmore experienced from this luckless termination of their visit to the encampments. Mrs. Evanmore did not escape so easily. She too received a chill, and it proved one of so virulent a nature, that she was for some time obliged to have medical assistance.

In rustic pleasures, and country visits, the summer had now glided away, and Rosalind, tired of their monotony, proposed their return to town for the winter. Evanmore at first looked doubtful; but the contest was soon decided. His lovely wife was within a few weeks of her confinement. She protested she would not pass that period at Alverston; and perceiving that now was the time to carry another no less important point, she announced, that she would never reside there. "She might perhaps spend a few months in the midst of summer; but she would not for the universe vegetate in such a dreary, dismal, tumble-down spot during the winter. The very sight of the old clipped yews and gable ends had made her melancholy even while a vertical sun shone full upon them. It would, in fact, be better to let the place altogether—and Mrs. Evanmore go into some of the adjacent cathedral or county towns, where there would be plenty of whist and gossip. She never could become the Lady Bountiful of a parish, administering domiciliary visits to poor patients, devoutly wishing, between each bow and curtsy, the intruder away. And no wonder! when she generally came more to gratify her own sense of superiority than to relieve them of their wants, poor things!"

Evanmore and his mother were mutually startled at this information, and both met it with some little resistance. But she was not in a situation to be distressed, and after some faint struggles, Evanmore yielded to her entreaties, and determined upon taking a house in London.

Mrs. Evanmore, always willing to reconcile difficulties and smooth down evils *by words*, observed, that, perhaps after all, it was the best plan to pursue. Rosalind would then be under the eye of Lady Wyedale; and though she had yet refused to forgive her, she had no doubt she would be reconciled to her by-and-by, particularly after she was a mother, and her ladyship must know could not be too rich. Miss Leycester had written to say "she would do all she could to appease her aunt's resentment, and as she was now her only companion, had most likely great influence over her." Her next remarks were conveyed in the shape of hints: "Perhaps it would be best, under these circumstances, to let Alverston. If she could be of any use to them, she should be most happy. She was not quite recovered from her indisposition, and in town she would have a much better opportunity of receiving advice from the first practitioners.

Evanmore understood her, but he dared not urge Rosalind on

such a subject, and Rosalind, who was present, soon gave him reason to believe she would never consent to the arrangement. Had Mrs. Evanmore been a quiet, stay-at-home, managing woman, she would have been happy to avail herself of such an offer, glad to remove from her shoulders the gentle load of domestic duty with which she intended to burthen them; but she was aware that Mrs. Evanmore was merely qualified to act the part of a *chaperone*, and she no longer required such an appendage when she chose to go out. She therefore turned a deaf ear to these innuendos, and early in the month of October found herself once more an inhabitant of the metropolis.

The house which he and his mother had occupied in the winter being disengaged, Evanmore hired it for three months, and in a few weeks afterwards the infant Rosalind Evanmore opened her lovely eyes to the world. As he pressed his first-born baby to his bosom, he felt for the mother a before unknown sensation of attachment. He had admired her, he had loved her, but now, as the mother of his child, she became dearer to his heart. At her request he took a small, but elegant house in Baker Street, and gave her unlimited authority to furnish it as she pleased. He experienced some uneasiness at Lady Wyedale's continued displeasure, but he was not without hopes she would be brought to relent. In answer to the letter Rosalind despatched to her sister when they first reached London, Felicia had written an affectionate reply, stating, that she could not visit them at present, in consequence of Lady Wyedale's opposition to her wishes; and when Rosalind was confined, a second yet more affectionate letter to the same effect had accompanied a valuable present of baby linen to the child. Still with so kind a friend always ready to act the part of a mediator, he entertained little doubt that her ladyship would be brought to consent to an interview in time, and that once achieved, he felt secure of all the rest. He had not, indeed, the most distant idea or desire that she should become her heiress, or be reinstated in all her former consequence, for he felt that Felicia had a greater claim on her kindness; but he hoped she would not exclude her entirely from her will, or, by adopting Mr. James Leycester, put it out of her power to aid them by her exertions to restore peace.

Rosalind rapidly recovered, and, under her superintendence, their house was as rapidly ready for their reception. Crowds of former acquaintance eagerly flocked in to pay their compliments, offer their congratulations, and satisfy their curiosity. Rosalind was again in her element, and, as the winter advanced, entered with fresh avidity into its amusements. Evanmore was at first her willing companion, but his change of situation had effected some revolution in his inclinations. He doated on his sprightly little Rosa, as he fondly called the child, and half wondered at the ease with which Rosalind consigned her to the sole care of her nurse. He had soon, too, another reason for declining to be

her companion. His mother, who had never entirely recovered from her ill-advised visit to the Danish encampments, suddenly paid the debt of nature. His implicit faith in her infallibility and knowledge of the world had been a little shaken by Rosalind's scepticism, and the ludicrous lights in which she had sometimes silly placed her, but she was still inexpressibly dear to him as the kind, careful guardian of his infancy, the affectionate companion of his riper years. He embalmed her memory in many sincere tears, and both from a sense of inclination and propriety, immediately withdrew from all scenes of public amusement. Rosalind, however, continued to frequent them, and, as she assured him there was not the smallest indelicacy in her going out, he did not attempt to restrain her. He felt, however, a little hurt at her deriving so much gratification from amusements of which he was no partaker; and as this idea presented itself, he thought of Felicia. "Perhaps his conduct might justly have given her more uneasiness than he then imagined;" and as he sat by his solitary fire, a long train of reflections suddenly took possession of his thoughts. "She carried some little trifling points too far," he mentally pursued, "but certainly she is a most amiable woman; and though she seldom made me laugh, as Rosalind does, whenever I spent an evening with her alone, I never found it a long one. There was a something so even in her temper, so cheerful in her smile, so beguiling in her conversation, that often I remember when I had thought the evening was scarcely commenced, it had nearly ended. Then her gaiety seemed so much to result from innocence and integrity—from a spirit conscious it had a *right* to feel happy—from a heart at ease—a conscience at rest—that it was a thousand times more exhilarating than that sportive trifling which bespeaks a lively, thoughtless mind, anxious to elicit pleasure, lest it may experience pain."

She was still unmarried; he had not heard a rumour of her supposed engagement to Mr. Berkely, and for the first time an apprehension of having been precipitate flashed across his senses. He started, as he became sensible that it was now no time to encourage such meditations; and with a sensation of shame and uneasiness, he sought in the caresses of his child to banish her remembrance.

CHAP. VI.

"There is a softness in his even smile
That ought to speak of peace—not guile:
And yet—I know not why—
There is a something in his keen dark eye
That chills me——"

THE winter and the summer, so gaily spent by Rosalind, were seasons of far less enjoyment to her sister.

Lady Wyedale was one of the many instances that may be found, to contradict the commonly received notion that a violent temper is seldom a vindictive one. Nor to a reflecting mind will it appear strange, that the same ungoverned heart which indulges the ebullitions of passion without restraint or remorse, may easily be brought to cherish feelings of resentment, though contrary, perhaps, to those general principles which are observed to influence peculiar temperaments. Her rage gradually exhausted itself, but her feelings underwent no real change; and vainly Felicia tried to mitigate her resentment, or intercede for her imprudent sister. The smothered flame always blazed forth with fresh fury whenever she made the attempt; and at length, apprehensive she might injure the cause of the Evanmores rather than promote it, she determined to desist from her fruitless attempts, till her ladyship's wrath should be softened by time—the general healer of dissensions which admit of no other remedy.

Her sister had been a wife about four months; when, as she sat at work one morning with Lady Wyedale in the drawing-room, a servant announced Mr. James Leycester; and before either was recovered from her surprise, he accosted them with the easy, yet respectful familiarity of a near, though not intimate relation. Nothing could exceed the marked, distant hauteur of Lady Wyedale, or the mingled chagrin and indifference with which she received the intelligence that he had formed a most advantageous connection with a gentleman in great practice as a solicitor, and should consequently reside for the future in town. Still Mr. Leycester stood his ground, and while conversing with, or rather talking to his aunt, Felicia surveyed with inquisitive, scrutinising eyes, the tall James Leycester, so often the subject of Rosalind's fears and merriment. He was, as Rosalind represented him, very tall; but his figure, address, and general air were unexceptionable. He had the dark eye of the Leycesters, but its meaning appeared somewhat different, and his manners more reserved. His countenance was handsome and intelligent, and the tone of his voice peculiarly soft and insinuating. Apparently unconscious of Lady Wyedale's wish to lose sight of him, he continued to prolong his visit, and in despite of her coldness, and Felicia's inclination to silence, contrived to keep up the conversation. Their subjects were necessarily such as belong to an early acquaintance; but he handled them so skilfully, that it was evident to his cousin they would be the precursors of a closer intimacy. He spoke of his father—of his resemblance to Lady Wyedale—of the alterations at the vicarage—of his own favourable views. "Hoped if he could be of the slightest use to his aunt and cousin, they would not scruple to employ him. He was older than when last he had the pleasure of seeing his aunt. Ladies could not sometimes transact their little affairs without the assistance of a gentleman;" and after a protracted

ball of two hours, took his leave, without seeming at all sensible that he had experienced a very unfriendly reception from his aunt, leaving Felicia much inclined to think him no formidable rival to his apparently discarded cousin, Rosalind, whose name never escaped his lips. Though Lady Wyedale did not even give him that general, but cold invitation, which it is so well understood means nothing, he resumed his visit in about a week, received the same treatment, but still received it undismayed, and persisted in paying these unwelcome attentions, till at length, half ashamed of her inhospitality, half amused by his conversation, her ladyship invited him, one rainy day, to stay dinner. The invitation was accepted with pleasure, but no violent demonstrations of joy; and from that auspicious epoch he became no longer a stranger to the table of his aunt.

Further intercourse confirmed Felicia in the opinion that James Leycester was destined to succeed in life, one of those men, in short, well acquainted with that accomplishment which may be termed the art of rising in the world, without, however, conveying any unfavourable impression of his character. No overstrained attentions, or hyperbolical compliments, indicated his desire to ingratiate himself into the favour of his female relatives. Nothing could be more gentlemanly, proper, or pleasing, than his manners to both; yet there was a continual endeavour to secure their regard, and remind them of his affinity. He often spoke of the Leycesters as a body, and always with honourable mention: related that his father had accidentally discovered, while examining some old musty papers, that they were of much more ancient origin than he had imagined. Sometimes remarked they had been distinguished for beauty, abilities, and respectability; and from thence took occasion to descant on the advantage and pleasure a man must derive from being so honourably descended. Every body, every thing, in short, connected with the Leycesters seemed to possess interest in his eyes. Very few mementos of them were to be found in the mansion of Lady Wyedale; but those few he soon discovered, and seemed to regard as sacred relics. A small set of spar chimney-piece ornaments in the breakfast parlour he never passed without some appropriate mark of admiration or attachment. An easy chair, which had belonged to his grandfather, and was since transferred, at Lady Wyedale's request, from the parsonage (because, recollecting the pleasure with which she used to loll in it while a girl, she fancied it possessed peculiar properties), was the object of his almost veneration.

"He did not wonder at his aunt's liking his dear grandfather's chair. Certainly, it was the very easiest and most commodious chair he ever sat in: it was unrivalled in its kind." And though Lady Wyedale peevishly told him she had not found it by any means what she expected, still the chair lost not an iota of its value in his estimation. He politely lamented its deficiencies,

but — “ *it was his grandfather's* — fine, handsome, clever, worthy old man ; there he used to sit while he composed his sermons, and attended to the welfare of a family, whose prosperity had undoubtedly exceeded the most sanguine expectations he could have indulged. How would he have been gratified if he could have supposed his chair would grace the splendid residence of his favourite daughter, be transported from the neat comfortable little library in the vicarage, to the superb apartments of Lady Wyedale ! And yet, elegant and superb as were her ladyship's rooms, and their elegance and magnificence were unrivalled, there was something in the vicarage that insensibly attracted him, a charm beyond what he could ever feel for any other place. To be sure, the rooms were not large, the grounds were not spacious ; but then it had belonged to the Leycesters so many, many years ; had been successively the abode of his grandfather and father, presented to them by a nobleman who had always the highest respect and regard for the family. Besides, it was near a small plot of ground, called *Leycester Bank* : it was now commonly known as *Liston Bank* ; but no doubt that was a vulgar abbreviation of *Leycester Bank* ; and though some people might laugh at such a belief and such feelings, he must acknowledge he was firmly convinced it had originally belonged to the family, and never derived so much pleasure from any walk, as a stroll over *Leycester Bank*. It was the fashion now to decry family, and those little hereditary feelings of consequence which persons of birth usually felt ; but he observed the moment people grew rich, they always tried to obtain such honours as accompaniments ; and although the distinction of ancient blood might be held as trifling, he always saw everybody so ready to fasten on a genteel relation, or a remote tradition, he could not help fancying it was secretly more a source of satisfaction than was usually admitted. The *Leycesters*, to be sure, had now no landed estates left, but want of affluence did not diminish their claims to other honours. The wheel of fortune had gone round, and lowered them to the middle rank of society ; but they were not disgraced — they were not fallen.”

Whether he was —

“ Like one,
Who having, unto truth, by telling of it,
Made such a sinner of his memory
To credit his own lie, — he did believe ”

in these bold claims to hereditary distinction on the side of the *Leycesters*, or they formed part of a cunningly devised scheme, they proved too gratifying to Lady Wyedale's vanity to be very keenly scrutinised ; and, after some little surprise at their assumption, they became by repetition so familiar to her ear that she began to wonder either at her ignorance or indifference to these family honours.

Once or twice a doubt of his sincerity passed suspiciously

through Felicia's brain as she listened to these eulogiums on her father's family ; but she felt as if it wronged him, and degraded herself. His manner had no appearance of design ; and though she thought his attachment towards these inanimate objects rather too strong, it spoke amiable feelings, and was not, perhaps, unnatural in a young man accustomed from infancy to consider himself the only male branch of a respectable and declining house. She knew that illustrious descent and untarnished blood have ever been held by all ages and all nations in high estimation ; and while the consideration of such advantages impelled persons to act worthy of their ancestors, she thought they were distinctions alike honourable and gratifying. His behaviour towards Lady Wyedale met her more marked admiration. He never forgot the respect due to her station and years, or seemed to think their relationship entitled him to the use of any freedoms, however trifling. Seemingly aware, in this short acquaintance, that opposition only strengthened her ladyship's resolves, he never contradicted her on any point ; but then he did not tamely or meanly chime in with her ; and when he perceived that she was in so happy a frame of mind, that it would be equally displeasing to her to have a coadjutor, or an opponent, always held his tongue. His silence did not, however, appear the effect of either sullenness or servility ; and Felicia, justly esteeming a command over the temper a great and striking virtue, felt inclined to view her cousin with considerable respect, though there was a something, she could not divine what, in his manners and appearance, that unaccountably repressed every disposition to see him with regard, or that warmth she wished to feel towards so near a relation. Perhaps it was produced by the calm, undeviating inflexibility of his deportment, which never became either warmer or colder than when he paid his first visit, or a lurking apprehension that he might realise Rosalind's forebodings, and deprive them both of the least share of Lady Wyedale's fortune. Felicia felt almost ashamed of the latter suggestion, and tried to believe it was impossible such a consideration could have any weight in determining her feelings towards him, though she naturally indulged a strong desire to inherit a portion of that affluence which Lady Wyedale could so well deduct from the possessor of her estate. During her ladyship's life, or while she had a home under her roof, she found a hundred and fifty pounds a year more than she could expend ; but should she from her death, or any capricious change of sentiments, be compelled to support herself, she was aware it would scarcely maintain her in that sphere to which she belonged. And her faith in her ladyship's present kindness or future attention to her comforts a little diminished by these reflections, she resolved to abridge herself of every superfluous gratification, that she might accumulate something to meet any unexpected contingency. The hopes she had permitted herself to indulge that Lady Wyedale would this summer

pay her long-promised visit to the Lodge, were again doomed to be disappointed.

Lady Wyedale so thoroughly disliked the Berkelys, Dursleys, and almost all the families who there formed her only society, that in addition to a whimsical apprehension that the air did not agree with her, she felt a sort of aversion to the very idea of passing a summer in such a situation; and not till the approach of autumn did she intimate the slightest wish to change her abode. She then hinted at a visit to Brighton. Felicia heard the name with a shudder; but aware that her dislike to the plan would, in all human probability, accelerate its execution, she remained perfectly silent; and having no Rosalind either to urge or oppose her views, her ladyship continued to talk of the journey, and anticipate the excursion, till the season for undertaking it was past.

The return of winter was unmarked by anything of interest or importance to Felicia, excepting that she received an unexpected visit from Mr. Berkely. He was the bearer of a letter from his mother; and the ostensible motive of his journey to town, a desire to negotiate for a small living, which his mother, sisters, and self were desirous of purchasing as a wedding present for Mr. Andrew Berkely. The nature of that arrangement to which he had alluded, while she was at the Grove, was now explained, and pleased at such a proof of the unanimity and generosity of the family, she more deeply regretted that the unmerited detestation of Lady Wyedale would tend to separate her from persons whose friendship she felt was an honour, and whose society was so gratifying to her feelings.

Mr. Berkely remained in London nearly a month, and during his stay frequently called in Portman Square. Lady Wyedale's manner was by no means flattering, but he might have taken a lesson from Mr. Leycester, for he appeared totally unsuspecting that she did not see him with pleasure: continued his morning visits, though uninvited to make any other: preserved towards her the respectful demeanour which her age and rank entitled her to receive; and, when he at length took his leave, had so far won on her regard, that she pronounced him the best of his family: grieved he was such a fool as to be tied to his mother's apron-strings; wished he would become more of a man and less of a methodist; and prophesied his mother and sisters would wheedle him out of all that he had.

CHAP. VII.

"Religion prepares the mind for encountering, with fortitude, the most severe shocks of adversity; whereas vice, by its natural influence on the temper, tends to produce dejection under the slightest trials." BLAIR.

THE return of the Evanmores to London was the commencement of fresh hostilities between Lady Wyedale and Felicia; and the wish of the latter to visit them was as constantly productive of a battle as the war-whoop of the Indians; if that can justly be termed a battle which is carried on with violence only on one side; for though she sometimes sounded the signal, by requesting permission to call upon Rosalind, Felicia seldom pursued the contest further.

Wearied at length of these continual squalls, and apprehensive she might, by showing the Evanmores this mark of her forgiveness and good-will, exasperate her ladyship still further against them, she conceded the point; and after satisfying her own feelings by sending her little niece a valuable assortment of clothes, began to think it was, perhaps, better she should abstain from personally noticing them, till time should have obliterated yet more the remembrance of the past. But this caution was produced by no sentiment of lingering attachment towards Evanmore.

They who have early habituated themselves to combat with their wishes, when in opposition to their duty—to overcome the minor misfortunes of life, by the exercise of self-control and self-denial, will find the same exertions suppress, if not extinguish, the strongest feelings of the heart—surmount the bitterest trials to which human nature can be exposed.

The hour that bound him to her sister destroyed the mental link which so long united her to him. She felt that his happiness must ever be interesting to her; but it was incorporated with an equal degree of anxiety for Rosalind's. The name of Evanmore was never heard by her with indifference; but her emotions were those with which we listen to intelligence relative to a friend, once, perhaps, more dearly prized than now. He was the husband of Rosalind; and in that sacred title, the play-fellow, the lover, was lost for ever. The struggle had been dreadful, but it was short; and while she still felt assured she should love no other, she had ceased to love him.

But, though conscious such were indeed her sentiments respecting him, she was not ignorant that Rosalind, Evanmore, and the world, might conceive her self-conquest as yet by no means so decisive, and any hasty desire to visit her sister interpreted either into a wish to seem more indifferent than she really felt, or ascribed to a still more unpleasant motive. Under these circumstances she obeyed Lady Wyedale's commands with cheerfulness, and, by augmented attention to her, strove to atone for

her late opposition to her will. For this increased desire to stand well with her ladyship she had many reasons. The prominent one was that inclination to live in peace and charity with all around her, which her growing piety daily strengthened. The others all sprung from the same source, though varied in their character—a fear of Mr. Leycester. By a series of little, and almost impalpable attentions, he had, at length, become nearly domesticated in Portman Square, and every hour betrayed to the keen discrimination of the observant Felicia, that while one branch of the family was silently gaining ground, the other stood a fair chance of being supplanted. Supplanted! what volumes of bitterness do there not lie in the compass of that single word, supplanted? The long loud thundering rap of mere acquaintance had died away into the familiar rat-tat of relationship; and the cold formal card of distant heartless ceremony, once left with all due solemnity at the door, was exchanged for a “Pray give my kind love to my aunt and cousin, and say I have called.” Still *his* manner on essential points continued the same—it was in *Lady Wyedale’s* that there was a visible, sensible difference. Since he had persuaded her to think so highly of the Leycesters, she no longer disliked to talk of her father’s family, once a subject of great, though secret aversion; began to take some interest in the welfare of his sisters; inquired whether they were likely to marry well, and what they intended doing should their father, who was in a declining state of health, die? To all these inquiries, he returned affectionate, and apparently highly disinterested answers.

“They were very fine, amiable girls, had received superior educations, and there was every reason to hope, from their personal attractions and extremely respectable connections and station, they would eventually form advantageous alliances. Should his beloved father’s illness terminate fatally, which he hoped and believed would not be the case, from the former excellency of his constitution, unadvanced age, and known longevity of the Leycesters, they would all reside together; and though, poor girls, their fortunes, taken individually, would be very trifling, united they would still be able, with judicious economy, to keep up their rank and station in society.”

These replies were so satisfactory to his aunt, that she began to feel her long indurated heart soften towards her absent relatives. She entirely coincided with him in thinking there was every probability of her brother’s recovery,—at least the idea was so flattering, she determined not to lose sight of it, for he was scarcely two years her senior; and after a long eulogium from her nephew on the merits of the family, she one day ordered her butler to send his father a valuable present of wine, and commissioned Felicia to purchase his sisters some elegant articles of millinery. For the first time, young Leycester then gave way to anything like joy on receiving kindness from her, and demon-

strated his feelings by open, warm expressions of obligation. He assisted at the packing-up of both, and his pleasure seemed of so unselfish a nature, that Felicia knew not how to blame its exuberance.

"How would his father be gratified by this mark of delicate attention from a dear sister, the only survivor, with himself, of a numerous family ! Nor was it merely the value of the wine, or the kindness that dictated the present,— he could not procure such in the country. He anticipated what would follow its arrival at the parsonage ; his father would immediately give a dinner to a few of his friends, and an additional glass or two every day would add ten years to his life. He wished he could see his sisters at the next county ball. How would they be delighted ! How would the Miss Starts, the under-sheriff's daughters, envy their elegance ! They were haughty, insolent girls, arrogating to themselves great importance on account of their father's riches, and had often been inclined to take a precedence of his sisters, which they *naturally* resisted."

"All this may be very undesigned and very unaffected," thought Felicia, as she listened to these observations, and marked their effect on Lady Wyedale, "but they are not ominous of good to Rosalind." For herself she was almost indifferent, but she had latterly learnt to think it was of the utmost moment that Rosalind should not be excluded from her aunt's will. From Rosalind she continued to hear occasionally, but her letters were so short, and so cautiously free from the least allusion to her situation or views, that she must have remained in total ignorance of either, had it not been for young Leycester, who seemed well acquainted with both, though he did not of course visit his former acquaintance in her present state of disgrace. That he should not renew, under such circumstances, his previous intimacy with her, did not surprise Felicia ; but she was sometimes astonished at the accurate information he seemed to possess respecting her, and would have felt obliged to him had he occasionally suppressed such of it, as that, "Last night she was the most elegantly dressed woman at the Opera. Yesterday she purchased a most beautiful cabinet at Mrs. Spendall's sale. This morning she was driving herself in Mr. Evanmore's phaeton ; and, by the grace and skill with which she managed the horses, attracted universal attention ;" because though communicated without a personal comment, and as if merely *pour passer le temps*, such anecdotes were not calculated to place her prudence in any favourable light, and were never heard by Lady Wyedale without a sneer, a flush of indignation, or a malignant conjecture as to the duration of her extravagance. On this subject she was indeed beginning to feel uneasiness, and regretted extremely that Lady Wyedale's unabated rancour forbade her to hint her alarm in a personal visit. She was fearful of breathing in her letters the least apprehension that she was inclined to be expensive, lest they might by any accident

fall into Evanmore's hands, and awaken opinions inimical to her domestic happiness; and now, doubly anxious for an interview, she determined to seize some opportunity of meeting her in the street. Hitherto she had rather avoided the possibility of such a *rencontre* than encouraged it. The intuitive openness of her character taught her to detest anything that bordered on the deceptive; and after tacitly promising not to visit Rosalind, she thought a premeditated renewal of their intercourse in any other way an infringement on the treaty of peace established between them by this sacrifice on her side. Still, she had often wondered, that in a six months' residence in the same place, chance had not thrown them together; and though she made every possible allowance for distance, different hours, &c. &c., she could not help thinking the Evanmores had felt the same disposition to avoid a meeting, or one must ere now have been effected. As this suspicion gained ground, she felt more inclined to achieve a personal interview with Rosalind. She believed she possessed some influence over her mind, and at all events she was resolved to communicate her apprehensions respecting young Leycester, that she might not involve Mr. Evanmore, under the delusive hope of being reinstated in Lady Wyedale's favour.

The morning after she formed this determination, she put on her bonnet, and after executing some little commissions for Lady Wyedale, directed her steps towards Baker Street. It was the hour when, as James Leycester said, she was accustomed to drive into the park, and with a beating heart she had lingered about the adjoining streets nearly twenty minutes, when she met, not Rosalind, but Evanmore; they came upon each other so suddenly, that retreat was impracticable. Evanmore involuntarily shrunk from her with mixed sensations of shame, embarrassment, and uneasiness; but he felt that it was impossible to avoid addressing her, and trying to conquer his agitation, he accosted her with an affected air of *nonchalance*, that ill concealed his internal distress. Felicia's reply calmed him more than ten thousand personal struggles: it was mild, unconstrained, and composed. She expressed her pleasure at seeing him, inquired kindly after her sister and little niece; and, after a few minutes had elapsed, he ventured to raise his eyes to her face. Her air was collected and serene, and her manner unexpressive of the slightest portion of grief or confusion. But she looked pale, and there was a grave dignity in her eye and deportment, which, to an observant mind, betrayed that she had known suffering.

"Rosalind is not quite well," said he, endeavouring to acquire a little of her seeming tranquillity. "But I dare not ask you to visit her."

"I will brave my aunt's displeasure," said she, with a faint smile; "I am impatient to see my sister and dear little niece."

Evanmore made no reply, for he could not—and in silence they reached the house. He rapped loudly at the door; it was

opened to him by a dashing servant out of livery, and in a few moments Felicia had once more clasped her arms around her sister. They embraced without speaking — Felicia's emotions were known only to herself; but the blush of conscious shame glowed in Rosalind's delicate complexion, and lighted up her brilliant eye, beneath whose long dark lashes glittered a tear of mingled gladness and confusion; while a sense of Felicia's kindness, and her own scarcely honourable behaviour, gave a softness to her voice and manner that rendered her peculiarly interesting.

"I must now see little Rosalind," cried Felicia, endeavouring, by assumed gaiety, to throw a shade of cheerfulness over this embarrassed meeting. Rosalind rung the bell, and the nurse, with a lovely child, immediately entered the room. It was a sweet infant, lively, sportive, and blooming; already the dark eye of its mother beamed with dawning intelligence, and silken lashes rested on a cheek scarcely less marked by beauty. Felicia felt her heart dilate with before-unknown emotions; and forgetful of all but that it was her niece, she clasped it with energy to her bosom. — Evanmore abruptly left the room. His paternal pride had been gratified by her encomiums on his child; but there was a something in the manner of her caress, in the look she bent on its cherub face, that spoke volumes to his heart. Her affected cheerfulness had deceived Rosalind, and for a moment she felt half mortified at her indifference. But Evanmore saw through the veil, and penetrated into the motive. He perceived all passion was gone; but to him, her serenity was the calm of a frightful storm, which had spent its fury; and in the sickly smiles, "few and far between," that sometimes lighted up her features, he perceived no dawning of a brighter day. A sudden pang, keen as an assassin's stab, shot through his heart. He saw how dearly he had been loved, and wondered where he found the courage to inflict on one so fond, so gentle, and so good, such sorrow.

Felicia seized the opportunity presented by his absence, of hinting her apprehensions that Lady Wyedale would never be induced to pardon her disobedience, and her secret conviction that James Leycester would, in time, ingratiate himself so completely into her favour, that a trifling legacy was the utmost she permitted herself to expect.

Rosalind was visibly discomposed. She had ever felt a secret *resentment* that tall cousin James might become a formidable competitor for Lady Wyedale's possessions; and though Felicia glossed over many of his attentions to his aunt, and suppressed her own half-formed suspicions that they did not entirely emanate from an artless, disinterested, amiable disposition, she instantly ascribed his conduct to mercenary motives, bestowed upon him the appellations of hypocrite and legacy-hunter, together with various other epithets alike illustrative of her contempt and displeasure.

"I admire your house extremely, Rosalind," said Felicia, willing now to hint at the secret cause of her visit.

"The house is well enough for its size," said she, carelessly. "But as we have a family coming on, we find it so much too small, we are on the point of removing to a larger a few doors beyond; which, fortunately, being to be sold, Evanmore has purchased."

"I thought you had taken this on a fourteen years' lease?" said Felicia.

"So we did; for it was the only one we could meet with at the time at all likely to suit us, and the landlord would not let it for a less term."

"What will you do then?"

"Why, we must try to let it, I suppose."

"I fear you will sustain a considerable loss," said Felicia; "and, as you have a family coming on, you cannot be too careful, you know, dear Rosalind."

Rosalind burst into a laugh. "At the old work again, Philly! 'Pon my honour, I verily believe your visit has been contrived for the express purpose of giving me a few sly admonitions, and I accept your kindness as intended. But don't be under any further alarm on my account. I am not without an adviser, I assure you," and she gave a nod of mingled drollery and seriousness. "Eighteen months' union has just made Evanmore sensible I am not infallible. Mind, I do not say that my connubial expenses are the very antipodes to my virginal anticipations—simply what I say is, that I am not without an adviser. But I have not the least reason to be discontented; the discovery is usually made much sooner; and, in return, I have learnt that he can raise his voice a little above piano. Still we get on pretty well, better than most married people, I dare say; and as to this mighty calamity which has lengthened your face two inches, there we are agreed; at least, nearly so; for though he rather objected to our removing when I first mentioned it, he says himself the rooms are too confined to admit of anything like a rout, and that the last we had half-killed him, the heat was so excessive."

Felicia felt by no means so convinced they were unanimous on this subject, and in a guarded voice, she asked, if it were necessary to have parties so large the room would not conveniently accommodate them.

"Absolutely!" replied Rosalind. "Those at all events who do not choose to give up the world, and live like hermits, find it indispensable."

Felicia could only express her regret; remonstrance seemed vain, for the house was purchased, and from such a decision there seemed no appeal: she, therefore, merely further observed, she hoped her dearest sister would not be offended at her hinting, that, as she feared little could be expected from Lady Wyndale,

It was highly important no expenses should be incurred from any remote hope of her liberality.

Rosalind laughed; but her laugh had not quite its tone of former light-hearted hilarity, and she appeared anxious to change the topic to one more agreeable. "Having had courage to break the ice, I hope you will come again, my dear Felicia," said she, when her sister rose to depart. "Don't, however, if you think your attention to me will injure your own cause, or promote that of the sly young fox, who, I verily believe, formed this connection in London merely to further his suit with the old dowager."

"We cannot blame him, should such have been his intention," said Felicia. "He is as nearly related to her as ourselves; and provided he uses no unfair or dishonourable means to accomplish his design, we may regret, but cannot reproach him, should he succeed. My aunt also has a right to do what she pleases with her own fortune."

"Granted!" interrupted Rosalind. "People have always an indisputable right to leave their own property as they please; but it does not follow that they exercise the right, *rightly*. And if, after all her indirect but well understood promises to you, and all your patient endurance of her storms, she leaves you a trifling legacy, or discards for ever a niece whom she has brought up to be miserable without every luxury the world can bestow, because she has not married to gratify her vanity, to leave three thousand per annum to a despicable sycophant, whom, a few years ago, she would have suffered to die of hunger, I shall always think she has acted a scandalous, infamous part, and carried with her to the grave the same bitter feelings, the same implacable temper, which through life turned her benefits into gall, and her house into a state of purgatory."

CHAP. VIII.

"The honour of a Maid is her name;
And no legacy is so rich as Honesty." SHAKESPEARE.

FELICIA'S visit to the Evanmores was followed, as she had anticipated, by bursts of rage from Lady Wyedale. Felicia was too honourable to hide such a circumstance a moment, and though her ladyship would have resented its concealment as a piece of the most unpardonable deception, she now affected to consider its being divulged a cruel insult, a bold, haughty defiance of her wishes and displeasure.

Felicia listened in patient silence till the tempest subsided sufficiently to allow her to say she accidentally met Mr. Evanmore, and had reasons of her own for not choosing to decline his in-

vitiation. A blush crimsoned her face as she made this apology, for it bordered too much on the deceptive to be congenial to so upright a mind, and had Lady Wyedale pressed her on the subject, to avoid prevarication, she would fairly have confessed all. But she was spared any detail of the circumstances under which she had renewed her intercourse with him; for though she could not love a person so wholly unlike herself, Lady Wyedale, much as she would have spurned at the bare suggestion of such a fact, beheld her with secret respect. She *despised* her motives, but she saw their effect with sensations of *uncontrollable esteem* and *unwilling reverence*. The blush with which Felicia mentioned her having met Mr. Evanmore she ascribed to the singular situation in which they stood to each other, not to Felicia's own consciousness that she had sought an opportunity of visiting her sister; for she had found her during nearly three years' acquaintance so uniformly candid, honourable, and sincere, she could have pledged her life on her word without apprehension.

These were, however, opinions she carefully concealed, and would have been happy to disguise from herself had it been possible. Unconscious, therefore, of the nature of Felicia's blush, her inquiries, after she became tolerably tranquil, were confined to what she had seen and heard during her visit. She had all the little, petty, mean tastes of a narrow, ill-directed mind, willing to extract aliment and amusement from every other source, rather than those which ought to have been its choice.

Nothing could bound her curiosity, or, she believed, escape her penetration; and as the surest way to be deceived is to fancy we are more subtle and wiser than other people, her ladyship had met with such repeated instances of fallibility as might have shaken the faith of one less satisfied with self. She asked the size of the house; desired Felicia would describe the very minutiae of its decorations; requested to know how Rosalind was dressed, how Evanmore looked, how many servants they kept, if they seemed happy, and what sort of a child it was, &c. &c.

Felicia felt inexpressibly disgusted with the littleness thus unblushingly betrayed, and she was collecting together her sewing implements, that she might evade any further conversation on a topic so truly disagreeable, when the door opened, and a servant announced Mr. Berkely.

She received him with a glow of pleasurable surprise, which neither escaped his observation nor Lady Wyedale's, and in addition to a former predetermination to dislike all that bore the name of Berkely, her ladyship now subjoined a personal antipathy to himself. Felicia's fears relative to her cousin, young Leycester, were as yet wholly without foundation. He had, by a course of the most dexterous, ingenious contrivances, cured her of her aversion to her own family, and engrafted in her heart something like regard for himself; but she had not the remotest intention of leaving him more than a legacy.

The passionate are seldom discriminating. If they love, it is commonly without the approbation of their reason — the effect of some sudden impulse or feeling, and they hate from the same cause. The sort of affection she had felt for Rosalind was now supplanted by a proportionable degree of dislike. She had cruelly disappointed and artfully deceived her — two offences, of all others, most calculated to gall and rankle in a spirit like hers. She would, like Shylock, have seen her dead at her foot, rather than that she should have formed such a connection, or forgiven it when formed. From that moment she resolved to bequeath every shilling she possessed to Felicia; and though James Leycester's unexpected appearance and qualifications had induced her to determine upon leaving a few thousand pounds into her brother's family, she still continued to regard Felicia as her heir. Felicia, she was aware, did not boast the consummate beauty of her sister, but she had a very attractive person, and those soft winning manners which generally please so much in the long-run. Her engagement to Mr. Evanmore, together with her retiring habits, had hitherto prevented her being an object of pursuit among those young men of fashion to whom she had been introduced; but she entertained little doubt, when it was fully understood she was at liberty to form some other alliance, and no longer thrown into the shade by her sister's superior attractions, that she would not remain unnoticed. Even Rosalind, in allusion to her being so universally admired, had laughingly said, she always augured ill of her success, when "Philly" was present; and partly with a view to mortify one sister, and contribute towards the aggrandisement of the other, she now spoke more openly about the disposition of her property: intimated that it would be her own fault if she did not one day possess great affluence; censured her dressing so plainly, and her indifference as to a future establishment; and fearful these baits would not be strong enough to influence such a mind, condescended to humour her prevailing weakness, so far as to throw out a few artful hints, respecting the *good* that might be effected by a person of rank and consequence, if so inclined.

Felicia listened to these master-strokes of policy, as her ladyship considered them, with the same degree of attention she paid to the variations of the wind; and provoked at their ill-success, Lady Wyedale was beginning to apprehend she had already conceived some attachment which might render her schemes abortive, when Mr. Berkely made his second appearance. Often since Rosalind's marriage had she regretted that she acquiesced in her wish to visit Elm Grove. She had acceded to her request, as Rosalind surmised, more from secret motives of her own than a desire to comply with their petition; for she felt she had unguardedly committed herself, when she heard of the dissolution of her engagement with Evanmore; and after Rosalind was free from Mr. Osborne, she no longer felt the smallest interest in her welfare. Under these circumstances she would not have been,

sorry had she found a home at the Grove, and protector in Mr. Berkely. She would have added two thousand pounds to the three left her by Mrs. Beauclerc; and, by never revisiting the Lodge, avoided any further intimacy with her or them. Rosalind's imprudence had again reinstated Felicia in her former short-lived power; and, resolved she should not blight her views by marrying little better than her sister, her ladyship determined to evince her disinclination to Mr. Berkely's addresses, as soon as she had reason to believe he intended to pay them. It was long, however, before even she, lynx-eyed as she was, could see just ground of apprehension. He often called in Portman Square, and sometimes asked Felicia to accompany him in a walk, or drive in his gig; but he did not seem at all solicitous to avow himself the lover; nor did Felicia appear to have the remotest suspicion that such was his design. Still he was in London without any sufficient cause for his residence there. He had, indeed, when he first arrived, once said, he should endeavour to acquire a thorough knowledge of Dr. Bell's mode of educating the poor, that he wished to attend a few chemical lectures, and occasionally superintend the alterations which were making in the parsonage-house of the living he purchased for his brother, which had unexpectedly become vacant. But these motives were too trivial for a two-months' absence from his beloved Grove; and without perceiving any open cause of alarm, she began to act as if she did.

There is a natural softness and delicacy in the manners of the great, which precludes all those rude expressions of dislike so often met with among persons of a lower order; but the intention, the heart, the spirit, may be rendered nearly as perceptible, though apparently disguised by the thin veil of fashionable politeness; and Felicia often blushed with shame and mortification at the many intimations Lady Wyedale perpetually contrived to give Mr. Berkely that he was no favourite. On Mr. Berkely they seemed lost—his deportment was uniformly the same: he was always respectful, mild, and gentlemanly; never contradicted any of her opinions, however pointedly in opposition to his own; yet never affected to be a convert, nor seemed at all ashamed of his sentiments and principles, though continually exposed to those little sly, diminutive attacks which she had seen so successfully levelled at Evanmore.

Perhaps there is scarcely any thing more exasperating to an irritable mind, than its perceiving that some one, whom it wished to have fair pretence for disliking, will not afford the smallest plea for such feelings, or the least decent opening for a quarrel. Weary of this ineffectual, though hidden warfare, and apprehensive he might by continued proximity gain still more on Felicia's esteem, she at length determined to leave London, and seizing an opportunity presented by his temporary absence from town for a few days, set off for Weymouth. The

sea decidedly agreed with her constitution. Brighton, she was apprehensive, at this period of the year, would prove extremely cold ; and she was unwilling at such a moment to revive Felicia's recollections of the time she had spent there with Evanmore and Berkely for her companions. At Weymouth one or two genteel families of her acquaintance were then residents for the spring. She had not visited the coast during the last year, and there she determined to pass the summer, if she found the air salubrious, and the place pleasant. To Felicia this was a very disagreeable arrangement. She did not love Mr. Berkely, and implicitly believed she should never love any one ; but his delicate attentions and conversation, equally removed from pedantry or frivolity, were becoming hourly more pleasing to her. She knew, too, that his sentiments on all those essential points, wherein congeniality is so productive of mutual regard between man and man, were exactly similar to her own ; and the calm, firm, manly way in which he met or repelled Lady Wyedale's illiberality, had contributed to raise him still higher in her estimation.

Half conjecturing Lady Wyedale's motive, and apprehensive he might not be wholly without suspicions to the same effect himself, she yet more regretted that the suddenness of their journey rendered it out of her power to take such a leave of him as would evince her esteem. Once she determined to write him a few farewell lines, but was deterred by the fear that he might possibly attach more importance to such a mark of her respect than she was desirous he should. She felt afraid there might be some indelicacy in thus commencing a correspondence with a young man, though that man were John Berkely ; and while she had not herself perceived any thing in his manner to warrant the suspicions which she saw Lady Wyedale entertained, of his being more interested in her favour than mere friendship demanded, she thought it would be extremely wrong to show him any attention which might be construed into encouragement of an attachment which she could never return. After, therefore, much deliberation, she resolved to entrust a message to Mr. James Leycester, indicative of her regret at being so unexpectedly obliged to leave town, that she could not personally thank him for the many polite attentions she had received from him during his visit to the metropolis, together with letters for his mother and sisters. Young Leycester readily promised to fulfil his commission. He had lately rather risen in her opinion, for he had been less communicative relative to Rosalind, and, without seeming effort or design, so attentive to Mr. Berkely, that she began to fear her own too anxious desire to inherit Lady Wyedale's possessions, might formerly have rendered her a little uncharitable. He had not, indeed, openly displayed any very great regard for him, or stood his advocate when traduced by Lady Wyedale ; but she felt she could not reasonably expect

him to make a bosom friend of an almost stranger, or *épouse* the part of a man so evidently obnoxious to his aunt; but he had often contrived to avert her ladyship's rising displeasure, given a turn to her strictures, which rendered them less offensive and less manifest, and many times gave her the opportunity of accompanying Mr. Berkely in his rambles or rides. For all these acts of kindness to Mr. Berkely and herself, she felt she owed him a debt of gratitude; and, satisfied she had done all she could to remove from Mr. Berkely's mind any unpleasant suspicion, after writing a few lines to Rosalind, she stepped into the carriage which was to carry her to Weymouth, with less reluctance than she had previously anticipated.

CHAP. IX.

"No after-friendship e'er can raise
Th' endearments of our early days;
And ne'er the heart such fondness prove,
As when it first began to love."

THE indolent, unhappy, and volatile, always find many charms in change. Unconscious that the cause of evil is within, they hope, by varying the scene, to escape the supposed source of uneasiness or *ennui*: nor for a time does it deceive expectation. Their locomotive powers are put into action, and the determination to be pleased seldom fails to produce the effect. But for the canker of the mind there is no efficient remedy, no lasting relief but one, and that one Lady Wyedale alone disdained to try. She would have travelled through the world, had recourse to the most nauseous specifics of every empiric in it, had she been assured happiness and health would have crowned her exertions. But nothing could have tempted her to throw herself at the throne of Mercy, and entreat for patience to bear the ills of life, or strength to overcome the passions that rendered her existence a burthen to her.

At the present epoch the weight of a real trial, the very first she had ever been called to support, lent its aid to augment her load of evils. Married at seventeen to an elderly man of no great personal attractions, with whom she lived unhappily; and, restrained by her marriage settlement from relinquishing his name—his death caused her no chagrin. She missed him from the establishment, that was all. Rosalind's absence was a real loss. Besides mortification and resentment at such a union, she felt the want of her sportive sallies—her graphic descriptions of what she saw and heard—their daily contest at chess, and daily airing in the carriage. Even those struggles for personal ascendancy, which Rosalind used to term, "games

at battledoor and shuttlecock," when the parties were not too earnest to win, excited her rather agreeably than otherwise—on Rosalind's authority even did her good, by dispersing clouds of caprice and fogs of sullenness—a sort of moral purification of a lowering unhealthy atmosphere, and as such beneficial. But this intense feeling of dull vacuity—of estrangement from what by habit had become a necessity, never in the smallest degree influenced her fixed determination not to pardon its author—it simply increased her hatred. To banish every trace of Rosalind was the only remedy that suggested itself to her mind; and it was no light aggravation of Felicia's sufferings to be continually called upon to remove every memento of her sister. Her drawings, her harp, her costly workbox and writing-desk, left perhaps in the latent hope that they might touch her aunt's heart through the medium of her eyes, together with the crowd of trifles accumulated during long years, littering every room in the mansion, were beheld and dismissed, as if they had been serpents endowed with vitality and power to sting.

Lady Wyedale had never before visited Weymouth, and for a while she was delighted with its lovely bay, soft atmosphere, and velvet beach. But hers was a spirit incapable of long feeling pleasure, and ere she had spent one month, instead of the six she intended, she reversed her panegyrics into captious censures of every thing connected with the place. The bay became a lake, disgusting by its smoothness and want of grandeur. The shore fatigued by its equality. The sands dazzled her eyes. There were neither sea-weed, shells, nor pebbles. The country round displeased her by its monotony, and deficiency of trees; and the roads absolutely blinded her by their unnatural whiteness.

To these complainings Felicia hinted, that almost every seaport possessed in a greater or less degree the same disadvantages; gently set off against its sins many acknowledged virtues; and, by a thousand little attentions, strove to divert her thoughts into more pleasing channels. But her ladyship had so long indulged a habit of finding fault, that the exercise of her ingenuity on such topics was one of the greatest amusements which she was capable of enjoying; and though, except in the article of health, she would not have yielded to any human being the least personal advantage over herself, she resented, with scorn and indignation, all the efforts Felicia made to persuade her she was not the most unfortunate creature in existence. Like many others, she would not have given up her claims to one individual distinction derived from wealth, rank, person, or talents, while it was her daily employment to find reasons for being discontented with her fate generally. Ere too she had spent more than half her allotted time at Weymouth, a new stream of uneasiness welled out; she began to be extremely surprised and discomposed at Felicia's exciting no serious senti-

ment of regard in the bosom of the many young men who were now her constant companions and apparent admirers.

The town was full of young men of considerable consequence : some visitors—others attached to a crack regiment stationed in the cavalry barracks. Felicia seemed by general consent to rank as her niece and heiress ; was generally liked, and still had received no distinct offer of marriage. She felt astonished, and as she judged, in common with many other persons, from circumstances, began to believe she was not so pretty and attractive as she had imagined. She knew not that Felicia, always honourable and upright, had so long made a point of repressing every attention which bordered on particularity, that she was generally supposed to cherish some secret attachment ; nor would the truth have ever reached her, had not a gentleman of high birth, willing to ascertain the nature of her claims on Lady Wyedale, before he entangled himself, made his first application to her. His family, fortune, person, and future views were all so satisfactory, that she instantly accepted his offer ; and gratified by Felicia's having the opportunity of forming so brilliant a union, avowed that it was her intention to leave her the bulk of her fortune. Satisfied on this point, he tendered his hand to Felicia, and was rejected. Lady Wyedale was enraged. She insisted upon her accepting so flattering a proposal ; and exasperated at her calm, but firm resistance, accused her of carrying on a clandestine engagement with Mr. Berkely. Felicia repelled the degrading charge with firmness ; and, to remove her suspicions that she was influenced to reject her present lover by attachment to him, candidly declared her fixed intention of never marrying at all.

Lady Wyedale heard her with astonishment. She had believed she might feel deeply hurt by so unexpected and mortifying a termination of her connection with Evanmore ; but that she would in consequence resolve on living single for life, she could never have imagined. She had no idea of the fervent nature of a pure, generous attachment ; and had rather supposed she would eagerly seize the first opportunity which presented itself, of convincing Evanmore she felt indifferent to him, and wipe away the disgrace of being supplanted by a sister ; but no incredulity mingled with her surprise. Felicia's strict veracity and undeviating probity had made her word sacred ; and she could, therefore, only endeavour to reason her out of so absurd a determination.

"Why should you be so anxious I should marry, my dear madam ?" said Felicia, when she had exhausted every other means of defence. "You are not surely a proof of the justice of your own theory ; for you never chose to marry after my uncle died, and I feel assured a woman of your age and pretensions must have had many opportunities of changing your situation, had you wished it."

Such is the weakness of the human mind, that delicate flattery

is seldom really unacceptable, especially when administered by one whose native ingenuousness, and usual honesty, leave little doubt of its being the result of sincerity. This was almost the first genuine compliment Felicia had ever paid her, and it instantly found its way to her heart. Though disappointed in one instance, she was gratified in another. She was relieved from all the fears she had so long felt respecting Mr. Berkely; and while she regretted that this whim had prevented her from securing so eligible an establishment, she had not the smallest idea that she would really adhere to so unnatural a resolution, and felt again assured she would ultimately become a personage of consequence. With a half pettish, half pleased, "Pshaw! you are really the oddest, most singular, unaccountable girl, I ever met!" she closed the argument, and left her to communicate in a whisper, to her immediate acquaintance, that Felicia had declined this gratifying alliance, that she might live a single life under her protection. She had none of that refinement of mind, or tenderness of heart, which naturally prompts concealment on such occasions, that mortification may not be superinduced to disappointment. She felt proud that one of her nieces might have moved in her own sphere; and a spiteful pleasure from thinking that Rosalind would be nettled by learning it. Felicia was, on the contrary, shocked by this indelicate proceeding. Her feminine fear of wounding the feelings of others, and her ladylike perception of what is due to every gentleman so situated, would have made her carefully shrink from the publication of the unexpected honour, for it was unexpected by her. On this point, little resembling the many young ladies who, after having received looks, sighs, and pressures of the hand with complacency, are quite surprised at the declaration—and sometimes quite offended also.

The flattering turn which she innocently and artlessly gave to her controversy with Lady Wyedale, secured her however very decent treatment during the remainder of their residence at Weymouth; and she would have regretted its termination had she not learnt from Rosalind, in a few lines received the evening previous to their return to town, that Mr. Evanmore and herself had reached Baker Street from Brighton. "From Brighton!" repeated Felicia, as she read the words. "How could Rosalind be so imprudent as to go there? How voluntarily expose herself to the mortification of seeing a man she once secretly loved, now lost to her for ever; or to the temptation of renewing an acquaintance with a dissipated man, who may be too ready to offer attentions which her marriage can no longer render alarming to his cousin, though they must be disagreeable?" On this subject she determined not to be silent, should she discover there was the remotest possibility of their intimacy being renewed. She harboured not a thought inimical to Rosalind's honour; but she knew she was vain, imprudent, and regardless of those restraints which are so necessary to preserve the fair fame of woman from

reproach; and while she half censured herself for feeling dejected, as she reflected on this unexpected intelligence, she could not conquer her uneasiness. Restless and unhappy, she laid down her work, and tried to divert her melancholy by walking. Lady Wyedale was occupied in superintending the packing of her wardrobe, and unapprehensive of being speedily wanted, she determined to visit, for the last time, her favourite promenade. She soon crossed the tottering bridge which leads from Weymouth to Portland; and after a lonely walk found herself on the velvet sands of Small-mouth Bay.

It was a cold, dark evening: the sun had already set, but his parting rays still lingered on the horizon; and threw a red, dingy lustre over the broad surface of the darkened waters. The tide was nearly full: large waves momentarily rolled towards the beach, and the wind, howling along the deserted shore, tossed its foaming billows over the craggy rocks that frowned in savage grandeur around, or dashed them hoarsely against the grey foot of romantic Portland, whose barren summit, enveloped in the wild clouds of an approaching storm, was hid in a dim veil of melancholy obscurity.

The yellow furze which grew between the interstices of the rocks, so bright in summer, with its golden blossoms and brilliant verdure, looked dark and withered. The grey towers of the ruined castle that crowned the chalky cliffs, and once bade haughty defiance to the power of its foes, seemed a monument of the fruitless pride of impotent man. The lurid beams of the sinking sun shone on its dismantled walls, through whose fractured loopholes and portals the ocean breeze rushed with a dismal cadence. The raging billows of a tempestuous sea beat its rocky basis, and reflected on their heaving surface the broken shadowy outlines of its dilapidated towers.

The warlike chieftain who had issued his proud mandates from its massive walls was now, with the busy multitudes who had toiled to rear them, mouldering in the dust of ages. Already tradition scarcely lived to mark where slept the peasant or his prince; and the blasts of a few wintry storms would scarcely leave a wreck to tell the mournful tale of fallen greatness. All was silent and desolate, chill and dark; the spacious halls and courts, whose vaulted roofs once echoed to the voice of mirth, the pomp of war, and the strain of martial music, were grassy and still. No trace of the busy haunts of man remained—no sound interrupted the dreary solitude; but the shrill scream of the sea-gulls, hovering over its roofless turrets, mingled with the distant roar of the waves, and the low whistling of the moaning wind. It was a bleak and dreary scene; and she felt her spirits grow momentarily more sad as she gazed. As she watched the waves crossing and mingling and breaking over each other, or idly chafing the rocks which Providence appointed to check their wild incursion, she saw a frightful picture of the ungoverned

mind, its restless impetuosity, its eager struggles, its wild ambition, its vain and presumptuous efforts to oppose the will of its Maker.

While she thus moralised, the world faded from her remembrance; its cares, its crimes, its joys, were alike lost to recollection. She felt not the shoot of blasted attachment, of disappointed friendship. Her soul had fled on seraph's wings to the bright habitation of him who called it into life; and seating herself on a fragment of the rocks that screened the shore, she remained wrapt in holy meditation, till the day's expiring light deepened to the shades of approaching night, and thick mists gathering on the tumultuous bosom of the wide expanse of waters, reminded her of the solitariness of her situation. She arose, and turning from the gloomy scene, slowly retraced her steps.

Mr. Leicester was the first to welcome their return to town, and the smile which lighted up his features, as he assured Felicia he had not been undeserving of the commission with which she had honoured him, made her still more his friend. The sentiment was not of long duration; for before the evening expired, he mentioned, as if casually, that Mrs. Evanmore was returned to town, after having been the rage at Brighton, had new furnished her large residence in Baker Street, and was expected to be the luminary of the ensuing winter. In addition to the uneasiness she received from such information, she felt displeased at its communication. "He must know this dreadful folly would render my aunt yet more her enemy!" she thought. And suspicious that some sinister design was to be answered by these frequent allusions to his cousin's imprudence, she determined she would hint her displeasure, and request that Rosalind's name might not be mentioned, if he could not be the bearer of more agreeable intelligence. Mr. Leicester listened to this reprimand with silent submission; admitted he had been wrong. It was not his place to involve himself in the affairs of others; lamented he had given her pain, and promised to be more guarded in future. But—and he hesitated. "But what?" said Felicia, in a faltering voice.

"Perhaps he should further offend, and really he had nothing of a disagreeable nature to communicate; merely that Mrs. Evanmore was inclined to indulge in those luxuries to which she had always been accustomed, and that in consequence they were reported not to be so happy as they had been. He hoped his cousin Felicia would acquit him of any intention to wound her peace, or that of Mrs. Evanmore, for whom he entertained a considerable regard, though he certainly had not visited her, because he knew he should offend his aunt without benefiting her; and indeed he was not quite sure these remarks had not proceeded from a wish to serve her through the medium of her sister."

Felicia's eyes filled with tears of self-reproach; and extending her hand, she thanked him, with unfeigned sincerity, for his ge-

nerous desire to shield from obloquy a dear but unthinking relative. "I will avail myself of your delicate hint," she cried, pressing his hand, "and instantly entreat Rosalind to be more circumspect in future."

Mr. Leycester seemed unwilling to receive her gratitude, and after twice requesting that he might not be implicated in the explanation which she intended seeking with Mrs. Evanmore, left her to her own gloomy reflections.

Sorrow, rather than surprise, was the impression left on her mind by this distressing intelligence; for ardently as she had loved Evanmore, she was not insensible to his being by no means the sort of character to excite Rosalind's real attachment. Having long determined when any real exigency required her aid, she would not hesitate to administer it, she sought Lady Wyedale; reverted slightly to what Mr. Leycester had communicated to both, and while she expressed her hope that she would not withhold her consent, fairly stated, that she could not exonerate her conscience from self-reproach, if she were to refrain from expressing her regret at what she had heard to Mrs. Evanmore, and offering with it her earnest entreaties that she would be more prudent in the management of her affairs.

Lady Wyedale, who had listened to this account of Rosalind's folly with demoniac joy, was extremely unwilling to sanction Felicia's visit; but she felt she could not decently refuse, after such a reason had been urged as a plea; and with a sneering assurance that it would be labour in vain, she granted her permission to walk to Baker Street. Grateful for her ladyship's acquiescence, however unpleasantly couched, Felicia delayed her visit till after the hour of dinner. It was a period which she could always call her own, from Lady Wyedale's custom of retiring to her apartment; and ever willing to consult the feelings, and conciliate the regard of her aunt, she instantly resolved to appropriate this hour to her purposed visit, that her absence might not prove an additional source of mortification to her irritable protectress. Anxious to render her visit as long as possible, she seized the first opportunity of retiring, and hastily throwing on a large cloak, commenced her walk.

Lady Wyedale had lately adopted the early hours of an invalid, and as she passed a neighbouring church she heard the clock strike five with peculiar pleasure, as affording her the hour Rosalind usually devoted to her toilette. It was nearly dark ere she reached Baker Street, and as she suddenly turned the corner of Portman Square, she threw an almost unconscious gaze towards the house of her sister. The shutters were not yet closed. A brilliant light shone through the drawing-room windows. The rich rose-coloured drapery was carelessly drawn aside, and she easily distinguished Rosalind, her husband, and the infant. Rosalind superbly dressed, as for a party, lay stretched on a sofa, more, alas! like a French opera dancer than a British

matron. Her eyes fixed on the fire; while Evanmore, in a plain frock coat, his infant in his arms, was pacing the room with seemingly hurried steps. Felicia averted her eyes—there was something in this scene that suddenly aroused feelings she had believed wholly extinguished, and with a shuddering sensation she hastily raised the massive knocker. She sent up her name, and the servant almost instantly returned to usher her into the drawing-room. As she crossed the spacious hall, and ascended the grand staircase, her heart sunk within her.

"Thoughtless, inconsiderate Rosalind!" she mentally exclaimed, "and Evanmore——" Ere she could finish this soliloquy, an adjacent door closed with great violence, and her conductor throwing open the door of the drawing-room, gave to her eyes Rosalind only—Evanmore had fled—Rosalind welcomed her with a smile of affection; but her manner was embarrassed, and Felicia thought her gaiety rather the result of effort than hilarity of mind. She rallied her about Mr. Berkely, and though Felicia first playfully, and then seriously, disclaimed all pretension to the right of regarding him as a lover, remained unconvinced, for Rosalind longed to learn that such was the case, and her wishes took the semblance of certitude.

"Oh! he is *epri*s, depend upon it," she continued. "Those demure looking eyes have done what mine could not achieve."

"I should feel sorry if I thought so," said Felicia calmly; "for Mr. Berkely can never be more to me than a dear, esteemed friend."

"So you perhaps think; but women, you know, in these affairs, see into each other's hearts with a degree of clearness surprising to more short-sighted people; and mark me, Felicia, you will be Mrs. Berkely ere long. I am sure I hope so at least," she added, sighing involuntarily.

Felicia smiled incredulously, but thought it idle to attempt to refute what Rosalind had made up her mind to believe; and anxious to introduce the topic which lay nearest to her heart, she changed the subject, by remarking on the elegance of the apartment.

"Yes, it is tastefully fitted up," said she, cheering a little, as she looked round her with an air of satisfaction; "and yet, 'tis lucky your eulogium was not passed in Evanmore's presence, for though the last house was not large enough to swing a cat, he is continually deploring that we left it."

"I fear," said Felicia, in a tone of suppressed anxiety, "you have sustained a considerable loss by the exchange."

"Yes, I rather believe so; for the man to whom it belonged was so unconscionable, he would not give up the lease without a bribe of five or six hundred pounds, though we had expended at least four in alterations and improvements. Nay, he had the audacity to assign, as a reason for his exaction, that we were such excellent tenants, he should never meet with our like again—

a Jew!—Nor is this the worst part of the business. We were so desirous of securing the house we now inhabit, I rather think we gave a little too much for it. Some officious meddling fool has told Evanmore a thousand pounds. That, however, I don't believe; but altogether, as we were obliged to furnish it afresh, and put it in habitable repair, it has cost a mint of money, and Evanmore is so provoked, he never hears the smallest allusion to the subject without being grievously discomposed."

"Has Mr. Evanmore then sprung a mine on his estate?" asked Felicia, affecting a playfulness of style little in union with her feelings, "that you could afford to spend a mint of money on your house?"

"Oh, no!" she replied, bowing her head most comically. "He tells me on the contrary that a gulf has opened in it—down which slide cottages, cattle, and ready rhino. He knows not how, unlucky wight! but so it is—nothing stops their constant movement, as things slip along inclined planes by the self-acting power of gravitation, when no greater force is opposed to their passage."

"Then I hope, dearest Rosalind, you will endeavour to meet his heavy pecuniary losses by extra economy in other quarters. You know dearest, that Mr. Evanmore has only a limited income, and no doubt——" She hesitated.

Proceed—nothing you may have to say can more irritate my nerves than your hesitating, stammering voice, and blushing, frightened physiognomy. There must be some explicit reason for this visit. Come, take courage! relieve my anxiety and your own. What have you heard? that Evanmore and I have done all but sign articles of separation?"

"No! no! Heaven forbid!" said Felicia, warmly; "but I have heard your expenditure a little commented upon—and natural surmises that it must be distressing to Mr. Evanmore, with an entailed estate—and little other property. I see you are displeased, but I love you so truly I will risk your further displeasure—it can be only transient—by adding that more circumspection of conduct and less indulgence in expensive trifles and amusements are now expected from you as a wife and a mother. Let me, dear sister, beg——"

"Oh spare my feelings that mendicant voice, and disconsolate visage—you have done your duty by me, and now I will do mine by you. I see plainly that you have heard a gross exaggeration of the state of our domestic affairs, from, I suppose, my good friend Mrs. Hustleton, and are rendered very uneasy by it. This then is the simple truth—we have certainly had some conjugal collisions, and when he has bounced like a Congreve rocket, I have rushed out of the room in the bravura style. Still, I dare say, we shall in time be just as happy as all other married people, though perhaps we shall not, like you and Berkely, be a couple of turtle doves, for ever billing and cooing. But then happiness

is not always composed of the same materials. You love the shade, I glory in the sun. You shrink from a breeze, I tremble only at the prospect of a calm. But you know, all joking apart, I am only just the same as I ever was. Now don't attempt to controvert this; I see you are pursing up your pretty face for the purpose. You cannot argue here with the least prospect of success; and besides, it is dishonourable to attempt to argue at all, when you know you are on the wrong side of the question."

"I admit you are not altered, my dear Rosalind; that is indeed the very ground of complaint. Every age and situation brings with it its own peculiar maxims, duties, and pleasures; and when you changed your name, you ought to have changed your habits. As a married woman, you should be more at home, be ——"

"Be," she interrupted, "a rib in reality not allegory—ever clinging to his side. Now I do not see why marriage should be a narrower of the heart,—why I should be always at his heels, or he at mine. I had reason to suppose Evanmore liked smiles and *badinage* and society before I was his wife; what right then has he to object to them now? Had I imagined, when I accompanied him to the altar, I must then throw off the gaiety and open-heartedness of youth, to become formal, melancholy, and retired, never would I have gone through the odious silly ceremony. I have no notion, that because I am married, I am not to enjoy the conversation of any other—let my overweening attachment for him, like Aaron's rod, unreasonably swallow up every other friend, acquaintance, and pursuit."

"If before you married, you had only thought, Rosalind, on the duties of that station which you voluntarily——"

"Thought!" interrupted Rosalind, "thought! who ever thought, and married? What did reflection do for you? Why it kept you single, and so it would me. Consideration is a worse enemy to little Cupid than all the bolts and bars, guardians and aunts in Christendom. In short, Evanmore is too much at home: it would be fortunate if he were in Parliament, or held some official station that would drag him from his darling fireside. Many couples have the *éclat* of being deemed superlatively loving, because the husband has a profession that probably keeps them apart eight or nine hours out of the fifteen. She, lulled into sweetness during his absence, by the consciousness that he is enabling her to gratify every wish of her heart, receives him with a different face from that which would mark his entrance after an idle saunter from his bed-room to the drawing-room, and back again: while he, good man, comes in so weary, he is glad to be quiet, and contrives to get over the remaining portion of his time very decently, in eating, drinking, asking questions, and telling news. You may smile incredulously or piteously; I know not the precise meaning of the melancholy motion which just now a little distended your mouth, but I assure you it is impossible to enumerate the many clashing, arguments, and cabals that are thus

eussion before her, Felicia did not feel sorry when the silver tones of a splendid time-piece over the mantel reminded her it was their dinner-hour. She feared he might suppose Rosalind had made her the depository of their domestic dissensions; dreaded lest her appearance might awaken at such a moment feelings little to Rosalind's advantage; and softly whispering, as she kissed her sister, that she hoped she would remember what had passed, she wished Evanmore as gay a good evening as she could assume at a period when her heart and her mind were equally depressed by the certainty that they were unhappy, and the dread that Rosalind's levity left no hope of brighter days. A whole volume of woful knowledge was suddenly spread open to her comprehension by this melancholy visit. Poor Evanmore! poor Evanmore! he was not fitted to lead a life of pecuniary difficulty, with all its subterfuges and pretences—his temper and his self-respect already lost in those shifts and contrivances which meaner minds feel as no degradation.

CHAP. X.

"For slander lives upon succession;
For ever housed, where it once gets possession."

SHAKESPEARE.

FELICIA returned from the Evanmores so evidently out of spirits, that even Lady Wyedale could not avoid treating with some involuntary tenderness a mind thus feelingly, thus disinterestedly alive to the interest and happiness of a sister who had injured her. She forbore to put any questions of a painful nature; and gratified by this unexpected piece of delicacy, Felicia began to see her with more favourable eyes.

It was not her "*nature's plague to spy into abuses*." She would willingly have lived in a sphere of her own creation; was anxious to believe her companions invested with every amiable attribute. She shrunk with Christian-like charity from contemplating the dark side of human nature, and when her discrimination could no longer be deceived by the beneficence of her fancy, she usually felt a sensation of regret, scarcely less poignant than that turbulent joy with which the world commonly discovers the failings of mankind.

Persons of strong feelings and keen susceptibility are equally alive to every little act of kindness and instance of neglect; and though she had never failed in discharging a single duty, while insult or indifference was her only reward, she could not animate her attentions with the smile of love or cordial expression of regard. She now began to feel a dawning of these sensations, and in the more cheerful voice, the more beaming eye, Lady Wyedale saw she was grateful for her forbearance,

But it was not in Lady Wyedale's nature to be spontaneously or consistently kind. She was destitute of those principles which teach us that the gratification of our evil tempers is criminal, and from long habit had become such an adept in

"The hint malevolent, the look oblique,
The obvious satire, the implied dislike,
The taunting word whose meaning kills,"

that she could not persist in a line of conduct which was equally unnatural and unproductive of that Satanic pleasure which she felt in inflicting pain.

It has been well observed, that the defects of the mind, like those of the face, grow worse as we grow old; and Lady Wyedale was a striking instance of the wisdom of this remark. That which in youth had been little more than a wish to be thought clever and *piquante*, an unamiable propensity to excite the laugh against her acquaintance, by long indulgence had degenerated into a desire to wound the peace and feelings of all around her—as the poisonous weed whose insignificance escapes the eye of the indolent husbandman, at length becomes a noxious plant which chokes up and destroys all within its baneful influence.

After many struggles to think well of her aunt, Felicia was reluctantly compelled to revert to her original opinion; compelled to admit, that her ladyship's virtues were only the incidental starts of a vacillating mind, while her evil qualities were the fruit of an unamiable heart, whose rank exuberance had never been checked by the restraints of piety.

While such were the sentiments that time gradually riveted in her breast respecting her aunt, of her sister she scarcely dared to think. Their last interview had left a stronger impression to her disadvantage, than any preceding one. She saw the follies of youth gradually maturing into the vices of age. She was already an expensive, unattached wife, she feared a negligent mother; and what a few more years might make her she dared not anticipate. Yet when she reflected on her education, when she remembered that no pains had ever been made to instil into her youthful bosom the seeds of real virtue, she thought of her more with sorrow than displeasure. She had yet known no real misfortunes; and unsullied prosperity, accompanied by brilliant beauty, was indeed, she felt, a fiery ordeal, from which the mind, unless early guarded, is little likely to escape unhurt.

"So young, so lovely, so much abandoned to herself," she sometimes cried, "ought she not to be more the object of my pity than my censure? Oh! what might I have proved had I, like her, been left to the guidance of such preceptors!—like her, been taught to bound my desires to this fleeting, unsatisfying world!"

As these reflections took possession of her fancy, again attachment revived in her bosom ; and though she blamed, she wept over her faults. The Rosalind she had so long loved with unbounded affection, still remained dear, inexpressibly dear, to her widowed heart. She did not, however, attempt to visit her. Daily, hourly, she saw that it was better they should not be personally intimate, but she frequently wrote to her ; and by often sending some little present to the infant Rosa, endeavoured to evince her perfect forgiveness of the past. Rosalind's answers were always slow in coming, and contained little when they arrived ; but still she persevered ; and in the hope that the indirect advice with which she continually filled her letters might have some effect, felt their correspondence was a pleasure. She longed, however, for some intelligence concerning them—but vainly. In Lady Wyedale's house their names were proscribed ; and as it was generally understood that Rosalind had alienated the affections of Mr. Evanmore from her, the same degree of caution was observed when addressing herself. Mr. Leycester, since this explanation, had never alluded to them directly or indirectly ; and ashamed of soliciting any information on such a topic, three months had elapsed since their last meeting in Baker Street ; when, one morning, while employed in reading aloud the daily paper to Lady Wyedale, her eye caught the following paragraph :—

"It is our painful duty to record another instance of the frailty of human nature, in the fall from honour of a lady young and beautiful, not many miles from Portman Square. The seducer is a nobleman, well known in the world of fashion, and his attentions have long been the expected prelude to this fatal deviation from the path of rectitude. What renders the circumstance peculiarly aggravating to the lady's family is, that the injured husband was originally *l'amant* of the lady's sister ; and allured by her captivations, forgot his allegiance to the amiable object of his first affections, who has ever since been inconsolable for his loss."

For some moments after her eye had glanced over these terrific words, Felicia felt like one whose sight had been suddenly blasted by lightning. She stood motionless—stunned—every object seemed to fade from before her gaze, and every feeling, every thought of her soul, seemed concentrated in the one dreadful idea, that she should see Rosalind no more—that Rosalind was lost to her for ever—that the link which had yet bound them together was snapped asunder, and could never more be re-united. This heart-rending image was chased from her mind by the agonising conviction, that Rosalind—she whom it had been her pride to love, whose charms had been the theme of every tongue, had forfeited all that makes woman estimable here, every hope of happiness hereafter—become a fallen angel. A loud rap at the door recalled her wandering

senses ; and eagerly embracing the opportunity of escaping from Lady Wyedale's presence, she flew into her own apartment. The paper was still in her hand ; and having a little recovered from the first shock of its intelligence, she again perused the passage which had given her so much anguish. That it alluded to Rosalind could not be doubted ; but it might be one of those unfounded newspaper libels, which were so commonly employed merely to promote the sale of its vehicle among a malevolent world, or the work of an enemy. These suggestions were too consolatory to be lightly dismissed from her tortured mind ; and clinging to them with the expiring energy of a drowning wretch, who suddenly grasps at a before-unseen chance of deliverance, she resolved without delay to visit Baker Street. Her heart throbbing with alternate feelings, she stole out of the house, and trembling from agitation, she reached Mr. Evanmore's door. Involuntarily she threw a shuddering glance into the dining-room windows as she stood on the steps, almost fearing to see some distracting confirmation of her worst fears ; but all seemed calm within ; and after two or three unavailing attempts, she at length gained courage to lift the knocker.

"Is Mrs. Evanmore within ?" she faintly articulated, her lips quivering with ill-suppressed emotion.

Never had even Evanmore's voice, as he answered, "Yes !" from an adjacent breakfast-parlour, sounded in Felicia's ears so sweet ; and with bounding steps she followed the servant into Rosalind's dressing-room. She sprang forwards, and straining her to her bosom, burst into tears.

Rosalind looked astonished and alarmed.

"Oh, Rosalind, you know not what I have endured ! what a load of misery is removed from my heart. Oh ! I thought I had lost you !"

"Lost me !" cried Rosalind, while a deep suffusion passed over her face. "What do you mean ?"

Felicia endeavoured to conquer her agitation ; and, drawing the paper from her pocket, pointed to the cause of her distress.

Rosalind perused it in silence.

"Forgive me, my dearest sister," cried Felicia, again clasping her in her arms, "forgive that I ever doubted you. But it was only for a moment ! I almost instantly conjectured this atrocious libel owed its origin to idle slander or malevolence ; and the more I reflect, the more assured I feel, that it emanates from some hidden enemy."

Rosalind's usual gaiety was hushed into gravity by this most distressing incident ; and, with something like anxiety, she asked Felicia what line of conduct she had best pursue.

Felicia advised that Evanmore should be made acquainted with it, and every effort used to trace out the infamous author.

Rosalind, however, did not approve of Evanmore being made a party in their conference ; and, after a moment's reflection, Fe-

licia, aware that Rosalind's improper conduct had in some degree subjected her to this cruel aspersion, became of opinion, that, if possible, he had, perhaps, better be kept in ignorance of this attack on the honour of his wife.

Rosalind had a mind capable of supplying her with ten thousand images to enliven the hour of happiness ; but it was unable to suggest one reflection to soothe that of disappointment, or furnish her with a single useful idea in the hour of need. She remained silent and dejected, till Felicia, to whose gentle spirit a judicious education had given that firmness which, if it rises not in adversity, at least withstands the shock, suggested that they had better visit the editor of the paper, and endeavour to obtain from him the name of the person from whom the paragraph originated. "If we cannot influence his feelings, we must alarm them," said she. And, after compelling him to apologise and retract the wicked falsehood he has thus circulated, we must trace out the author of this vile calumny, and keep him or them in check for the future, by the threat of exposure."

That strict regard to propriety and decorum, which was so eminently perceptible in Felicia, had never been a distinguishing feature in Rosalind's character ; nor did she possess any of that timid delicacy which adorns beauty, and is the protector and dignifier of virtue. Still, she was extremely hurt, that her levity should have incurred so severe a reproach, and blushed with shame at the mortifying idea of being held up to public animadversion and contempt. She had in too many instances found that attention to Felicia's advice would have spared her much subsequent uneasiness, to doubt either her affection or her understanding ; and she assented to the wisdom of these measures with a secret sense of Felicia's kindness and anxiety to shield her from obloquy being undeserved that kept her silent during their walk to a stand of coaches, from whence they hired one to convey them to the printing-office of the editor of the paper. After a long and melancholy drive, the coach stopped at the top of a dark, narrow, covered passage ; and the coachman, opening the door, told them the newspaper-office was at the extremity of a court into which it was the entrance. They alighted ; and, taking Rosalind's arm, Felicia prepared, with almost terror, to explore her way through the passage. At her sister's request, Rosalind had thrown a large common shawl over her elegant morning dress ; and each had taken the precaution of putting on a large veil. Nothing, however, could hide the matchless elegance of Rosalind's form, or conceal the extreme beauty of her features ; and, as they silently pursued their walk, Felicia's delicacy revolted from the rude stares and inquisitive looks of their fellow passengers. Rosalind also felt momentarily startled at the unpleasant novelty of their situation. But vanity is not delicate, and the love of admiration was too predominant a passion to render even this homage quite offensive, though she felt she

should not be sorry when no longer subjected to it. They at length reached the end of the passage, and saw before them a large, dirty, paved court.

"Can you direct me to the editor of the —— newspaper?" said Felicia, in a timid voice, addressing herself to a gentleman's servant in livery, who was evidently regarding them with suspicious eyes, not unwilling to have the opportunity of assigning some motive for their appearance in such a place.

"No," said he, insolently looking her in the face.

Felicia shrunk from him with apprehensive dismay, while tears of wounded shame rushed to her eyes. "It is for Rosalind's sake," thought she; and, dashing them away, she went resolutely forward. At the further extremity of the court, she at length saw, in large characters, "—— Newspaper-office," and eagerly pressed forward to its dirty portal. The office was full of persons, mostly in shabby dresses, tendering advertisements to a person who stood behind a railed counter with a pen in his hand.

"I wish to speak with the editor," said Felicia, in scarcely audible tones.

"You may say what you have to say to me," was the reply.

"No," answered she, in a firm voice, "I must see your employer; for I come on particular business;" hoping by assumed dignity to command attention. The effort was repaid: he looked at each a few moments, and then silently ushered them into a small dark parlour, lighted by a little glass door from the office. A person in a hat was busily writing at a table; and, with considerable surprise, he directed his eyes from his paper to these unexpected visitors.

"Are you the editor of this paper?" said Felicia, presenting the one which had given so deep a blow to her feelings.

"Yes," he replied.

"I require you, then," said she, throwing back her veil, and sternly fixing her eyes on his face, "to inform me whether you are the author of this cruel attack on the honour of an innocent relative, or whether it emanated, as I am inclined to believe, from some other?" She pointed with her finger to the paragraph.

He carelessly read it, and remained silent.

"The description of the lady intended to be thus held up to disgrace is so accurate," continued she, impelled by a sense of Rosalind's wrongs to unusual energy of manner, "that it cannot be mistaken; and if you will not voluntarily declare what could induce you thus to slander a person unknown to you, the lady's friends will be compelled to seek redress from the laws of her country. They are, however, unwilling to give publicity to so disgraceful a libel; and, if you frankly acknowledge the author, and retract, in to-morrow's paper, what has thus wounded their peace, you will never more be liable to any further uneasiness on the subject." There was a calm dignity in Felicia's face and manner that assured him she was in earnest; and, not particularly

desirous of subjecting himself to an action at law, to cover the malignancy of a stranger, he instantly avowed the paragraph in question had been put into his hands by a gentleman, who assured him it contained an indisputable fact.

Felicia now anxiously endeavoured to trace in his appearance any resemblance to their acquaintance, but vainly. "Can I see the paper containing this aspersion on my ——" sister, she was on the point of saying, but checked the rising word.

He believed she could. Such paragraphs were rarely destroyed until some days had elapsed, lest they might lead to unpleasant consequences, from which it would be difficult to extricate the editor. He left them, and in a few moments returned with a slip of paper. The characters were in a female hand, and disguised; but Rosalind's quickness, and Felicia's anxiety, traced them without difficulty to their author. It was the writing of Miss Lucretia Beaumont; and, assisted by this guide, they soon discovered in the description of the gentleman who brought it, Mr. William Flickerton! Nothing more remained for them to do, but insist upon an ample apology in the next day's paper; and, after dictating such a one as Felicia thought would not only vindicate Rosalind's reputation, but strike a terror in her calumniators, she left the office with blended feelings of grief and shame. All that could be done to clear her sister's fame from so foul a charge had been achieved; but Felicia had learnt to approximate the most distant periods, and familiarise her mind to what might be the consequence of present events. She felt that the purity of a name once defiled, like a gathered floweret, fades away; and its freshness, its lustre, never return. Silent and dejected, she reached the place where she had desired the coachman would wait their return, and, without speaking, threw herself into the carriage.

"Who could have thought it!" were the first words that burst from Rosalind, as she drew up the glasses, and the coach drove off. "A little vinegar witch! I always knew she was vain and pettish, but I had no idea she was so malicious a vixen. And the man—that surprises me the most. Who could have conjectured he was such a tartar? Why, if they do make a match of it, they will resemble the Kilkenny cats, who, on the faith of an Irishman, fought so furiously, that when the battle ended, the head of one, and the tail of the other, only remained to mark where the contest took place."

Felicia looked at her with melancholy astonishment. "Oh! Rosalind," she cried in a reproachful tone.

"I see you regard me as a merry maniac, rather than a laughing philosopher. But the fact is, my dear, I feel my mind relieved of half its uneasiness by knowing that this idle vexatious paragraph proceeds from private pique; and as it is of the utmost importance that Evanmore, in his present mood, should neither see nor hear of it, I am thinking I had better hasten home. If

I can prevent him from visiting his beloved club, where he generally lounges away half his morning, little mischief will have been perpetrated; for he is as greedy of news as the Athenians, and never reads anything older than yesterday's paper. So while you proceed to blow up the philosopher, I'll be off to coax him into a lengthy drive with nurse and child—presenting thereby quite a family picture of conjugal and parental felicity, to neutralise that painted by my good friends Mrs. Hustleton and Co."

She sprung out of the carriage as she spoke, and Felicia gazed after her with feelings of mingled pity and indignation, that rose even to pain. "Poor thoughtless creature!" she mentally exclaimed, "will nothing subdue thy heedless hilarity! And Evanmore——" She clasped her hands before her face, and vainly tried to repress the tears that had been so long trembling in her eyes.

CHAP. XI.

"It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
Though I alone do feel the injury." SHAKESPEARE.

In Rosalind's breast the whisperings of reason were made to give way to the more clamorous voice of the passions; but in Felicia's well-regulated mind, the affections were ever under the dominion of reason; and though almost broken-hearted, she suppressed this burst of grief, that she might not incapacitate herself from performing what yet remained undone, to clear the fair fame of one too volatile to be the protector of her own reputation. Drying her eyes and composing her features, she directed her steps towards the residence of Miss Beaumont, and soon reached the door. Hers was, she felt, a painful errand; and half sinking under the idea of accusing a fellow creature of so foul a crime, she was standing pensively at the door, waiting admittance, when, through the venetian blinds, she saw Mrs. Hustleton in earnest conversation with Miss Beaumont. The faces of both were exposed to her view, and she saw in the one so much triumphant wickedness, in the other so much eager malignity, that she felt her drooping spirits revive; and when the servant opened the door to announce that Miss Beaumont was not at home, worked up to an almost desperate determination to stop so evidently dangerous an interchange of sentiments, she said firmly, "I have seen Miss Beaumont through the blinds, and as I come on business, say, with my compliments, that I must not be denied." He looked surprised, and in a few seconds returned to say Miss Beaumont requested the pleasure of her company.

As she entered the room, she fancied she read guilty consternation in the features of both.

"I was not aware—indeed I had no idea, when I gave a general order to be refused to all visitors, that I should have the pleasure of Miss Leycester's company," said Lucretia, advancing to meet her, and then hastily drawing back.

"No, certainly not," said Mrs. Hustleton, in a whining tone, meant to express sympathy. "I am sure we had not the least hope of such an agreeable surprise. I quite rejoice to see you out, my dear madam."

"It is so unfavourable a morning for a walk, that I presume you scarcely thought Miss Leycester would venture," said Lucretia, half apprehensive that Mrs. Hustleton's speech might have conveyed too much.

"The sky is, indeed, very cloudy, and I believe I should not have braved its threats, had I not been extremely anxious to have some conversation with Miss Beaumont," said Felicia pointedly; fixing her eyes alternately on each, to discover whether the malice of the one had been abetted by the cool experience of the other. The deadly paleness that overspread Lucretia's face, and the eager flush of curiosity that crimsoned that of Mrs. Hustleton, convinced her in a moment she was not concerned in this atrocious attack on Rosalind's happiness and respectability. "Poor guilty, despicable creature!" she thought, as she viewed Miss Beaumont's changing complexion, "I will not betray thee to the malice of this woman, though thou hast done all in thy power to seal my Rosalind's ruin;" and she kept her mental promise. In vain Mrs. Hustleton assailed her with all that insatiable curiosity could suggest, or insolent impertinence utter. She parried every attack with evasions, or received it in silence; and after a protracted visit of nearly two hours, her persecutor at length reluctantly left them, despairing of gaining any fresh accession of information to that important packet which she had derived from Miss Beaumont previous to Felicia's arrival.

"Miss Beaumont," said Felicia, when they found themselves alone, in a calm yet solemn tone, "the object of my visit can scarcely be more painful to you than myself; but I owe it, as an indispensable duty, to a beloved sister to say, that I have traced a cruel, unfounded attack on her honour, made in a paper of this morning, to you."

Miss Beaumont fell back on her chair.

"I have endeavoured to be explicit, that I might spare you the pain and further guilt of denying what you cannot disprove. I pity the remorse and shame I see you are enduring; but the character of a sister is too dear to me, too valuable to her to be sacrificed to any compunctious feelings of regret for the fate of those who have so basely calumniated it; and before I leave this house, I must insist upon your avowing, in writing, that you were the author of the libel to which I allude, as a satisfactory proof

of her innocence to her husband, should it become necessary to show it to him, and as a check upon such flagitious attempts to destroy her unsullied reputation in future."

The terror Miss Beaumont had hitherto endured, now found relief in tears, and she sobbed without speaking, till Felicia, her gentle heart affected by her seeming grief and confusion, said,

"It is not our intention to expose you, Miss Beaumont, unless compelled by necessity to do so. To-morrow the editor of the paper will publish an ample refutation of what he this day announced; and, if possible, we intend to bury the whole transaction in oblivion. Should, however, the poison have spread too far for the antidote I have mentioned, Mrs. Evanmore must then publish that from private pique, not public scorn, she has received this bitter stroke."

"I have not behaved worse to her than she has to me!" cried the subdued Lucretia, aware that all subterfuge was vain.

"I know not what you mean," cried Felicia. "I am at a loss even now to conjecture what could tempt you to commit so cruel, so unfeminine a crime, against one who never injured you."

"Never injured me!" she cried, the sense of her injuries lighting up her eyes as she spoke. "Did she not write a lampoon upon both me and Mr. Flickerton? Yea, a shameful wicked lampoon upon us both; saying, that Mr. Flickerton was always afraid of being arrested, and that the settlements he would make upon me were estates in the moon; and insinuated that I was a mere empty pedant, that——" Her transient calmness here deserted her, and as memory presented her literary wrongs, she wept from rage and mortification.

For some moments Felicia was unable to make any reply. A new light had been suddenly thrown on this most distressing subject; and though she felt that Miss Beaumont's malice remained as little as ever without real apology, she could not avoid reflecting on Rosalind's conduct with deep regret; or considering, that a sense of previous injury might, perhaps, be deemed some extenuation of her conduct. She remembered how earnestly she had entreated Rosalind never to show the paltry lines, which had, it seemed, provoked this dangerous slur on her fame; and she was indulging in no pleasing speculations as to their journey to Miss Beaumont, when she said,

"I have them myself; for Mrs. Evanmore gave them to Mr. Osborne, and they were all over the town before I saw them, rendering us mutually absurd; but after Mrs. Evanmore jilted Mr. Osborne, Mrs. Hustleton procured me a copy, and I don't affect to deny that I then thought I had a right to retaliate upon her in return."

"I cannot tell you how much I deplore my sister's behaviour," said Felicia; "it was most culpable. But permit me to say there is a wide difference in the nature of that crime which

merely tends to make another ridiculous, and that which is calculated to deprive the sufferer of honour, respectability, and fair fame."

"Oh! as to that," said Miss Beaumont, with a sneer, "what I have said has done Mrs. Evanmore no additional harm. That she has not eloped, is a fact which speaks for itself; and as to *anything* else, depend upon it the world will not think more lightly of her from a newspaper paragraph."

"I presume you thought differently when you were at the trouble of disguising your hand to write that of which I complain," said Felicia, sternly. "You then, doubtless, believed that, though the calumny of her having left her home was a falsehood that must be refuted on inquiry, the circulation of her having received attentions which might authorise the report of such an event, would increase that suspicion which you are unfeeling enough to tell me rests upon her, and leave a stigma on her character which could not be effaced."

Miss Beaumont blushed, and again reverted to the wanton, unprovoked insult she had received from Rosalind.

"Recriminations are now idle," said Felicia. "I again however repeat, that Mrs. Evanmore's conduct to you can be considered no adequate apology for the bitter revenge you have taken; and I must request, as the morning is far advanced, that you will make the only reparation now in your power, by writing a confession of your crime, and assigning your motive for it, which may tend to the justification of both, if circumstances should compel Mrs. Evanmore to divulge what she now wishes buried in oblivion."

Miss Beaumont wept, and hesitated, and accused, and defended; but in vain. Felicia was resolute, and, after much reluctance, she at length declared she was the unassisted author of the attack on Mrs. Evanmore in the newspaper; and avowed, that she was instigated to this deed of malice by Rosalind's having previously made her the subject of a lampoon.

After obtaining this important document, Felicia left the irritated, mortified "foolosopher," as Rosalind termed her; and, with spirits rather more elevated than when they parted, again met Rosalind. She was aware that Miss Beaumont's having incautiously communicated the source of her enmity still further tended to exonerate Rosalind from the imputation of imprudence; and, with the first smile that had played over her lips since morning, she gave to Rosalind Lucretia's written testimonial of her innocence.

"The last dying speech and confession of that heterogeneous creature, an angry, malignant philosopher!" cried Rosalind, endorsing Miss Beaumont's recantation, and then carelessly tossing it, together with the newspaper, which contained the history of her imaginary crime, into a drawer in an inlaid cabinet. "By-the-by, who could have believed Osborne would have acted so

completely the part of a traitorous villain? I assure you I never gave him the lines which have cost us so much trouble. I merely showed them to him, and when, a few days afterwards, he asked to see them again, I little thought he did it for the purpose of abusing my confidence."

"Perhaps he had no intention, at the time, of betraying it. He then probably viewed them with pleasure, as the lively production of his future wife; and you derived a gratification from his applause, which rendered you fearless of future consequences. Afterwards, you know——"

"Oh, ah, I know. To be sure, circumstances, as the old saying is, do alter cases. Perhaps I ought to forgive him; but no apology can be offered for that old malignant—that cold-blooded Machiavel, who conveyed them into Lucretia's hands, from the mere love of mischief, the mere desire of rendering all within her baneful influence miserable and divided. Even you can say nothing in mitigation of her offence."

"I am not inclined to extenuate her conduct," said Felicia; "it is perfectly consistent with her character; and I implicitly believe that it sprung from the motives you have mentioned. But she is not conscious of this fact. She would tell you, and believe she spoke the truth, that she also was a party concerned; and, exasperated at your behaviour to her relation, had just as much reason to be your enemy as Mr. Osborne, Mr. Flickerton, Miss Beaumont, or any of the multitude of other persons whose hatred you have secured, not by injuring, but by laughing at them. The squibs you found so much amusement in firing off, have, you now see (as I predicted), burnt your own fingers."

Rosalind's understanding admitted the force of this argument; and as she looked unusually grave, Felicia eagerly seized the, as she thought, favourable moment of impressing on her mind the folly and imprudence of which she had been guilty.

Conscious of Felicia's claims both to her attention and gratitude, Rosalind heard her with unwonted patience; and, excepting a grave request that she would endeavour to condense what she had to say, with now and then a sly complimentary exclamation on the merit of her colloquial powers, which betrayed a levity nothing could subdue, she listened like one resolved to amend the error of her ways.

"Well done, Philly!" she cried, patting her sister, when she finished an address prompted by the purest attachment and most refined motives. "As I have said before, you are an orator of the first water. Edmund Burke could scarcely have been considered your rival had he been now an inhabitant of this wicked world; and I question whether Phillips himself could have thrown more light on the odious crime of lampoon-making, or painted more pathetically the sad consequences arising from a pasquinade. And as the only return I can make you for so much kindness of intention, so much splendid eloquence, and so

many brilliant metaphors, I fairly determine to be more guarded in future, which I know will secure your everlasting gratitude."

"The resolving to amend is only the first step of the ladder of virtue; before I can give you unqualified praise, the whole must be mounted," said Felicia, with a smile. "And I hope," she continued, anxiously taking Rosalind's hand, "that you will never cease to remember the events of this morning, as the surest preservative against similar ——"

"Remember, my dear!" she playfully interrupted, "what for? To vex myself! It is one of my maxims, that it is the height of folly to torment one's-self when one has so many young friends who will cheerfully take that trouble off our hands. I make it, in short, a rule to forget everything that will give me pain. And in this world, where there is so much to make us unhappy, if we can contrive to avoid misery, surely we are wise! For every evil hour so escaped, diminishes, you know, the wretchedness of existence; and every retrospection buried in oblivion is, as the French phrase it, *autant de gagné*", so much added to the happiness of life."

"Oh, Rosalind!" cried Felicia, taking up her gloves, with the dejected air of one who feels it hopeless to contend, "I see you are proof equally against affection and reason. I must leave you — and I leave you as I found you, deaf to the voice of prudence."

"No, not that," cried Rosalind, catching her hands within her own. "I do assure you, what you have said has made some alteration in my sentiments; and though I certainly do not intend to dwell upon this contemptible slander long enough to tempt me to commit suicide, yet, I assure you, it has made such an impression upon me, that I would, for the future, as soon put my hand into a hornet's nest, as employ my fingers in panegyricising the abilities of the ungrateful Lucretia; and shall never see either a philosopher or a speculator without an instinctive shudder, which will equally remind me of their sins and my own. As a proof that I am not deaf to the voice of prudence, I solicit, as a favour, that you will come early to-morrow morning, and spend the day with me, in defiance of the hurricane Auntie Wyedale will raise in consequence; for it is of the utmost importance that Evanmore should be kept out of a coffee-room while I am the subject of newspaper observations. You know 'what the eye does not see, the heart cannot grieve at,' or, as the Italians say, '*Peccato celato e mezzo perdonato*;' and your accompanying us in a drive through the parks, squares, &c., in his phaeton, will tend, more effectually than any other measure, to defeat the malevolence of Miss Beaumont and my other enemies."

Felicia knew not how to refuse this request, however disagreeable to herself to comply with it. She saw such a step would, indeed, as Rosalind imagined, be of all others calculated to re-

move every unfavourable impression from the mind of the public; and, with a deep sigh, she promised to spend the ensuing day in Baker Street.

CHAP. XII.

- " Oh, thou ! by Heaven ordained to be
 Arbitress of man's destiny !
 From thy sweet lip one tender sigh —
 One glance from thine approving eye —
 Can raise or bend him at thy will,
 To virtue's noblest flights, or worst extremes of ill !
- " Be angel-minded ! and despise
 Thy sex's little vanities ;
 And let not Passion's lawless tide
 Thy better purpose sweep aside ;
 For woe awaits the evil hour
 That lends to man's annoy thy heaven-entrusted power.
- " Woman ! tis thine to cleanse his heart
 From every gross unholty part ;
 Thine, in domestic solitude,
 To win him, to be wise, and good ;
 His pattern, guide, and friend to be,
 To give him back the Heaven he forfeited for thee — "

FELICIA's absence had not, fortunately, been perceived by Lady Wyedale; and the afternoon passed in tolerable harmony, till, amid blushes and hesitations, she hinted a wish to spend the ensuing day in Baker Street. Her calls had always been disagreeable to Lady Wyedale, though submitted to because she could assign no fair pretence for forbidding them; and the very idea of a visit was so repugnant to her feelings, that she instantly refused her concurrence. Felicia received the harsh intimation of her will with extreme pain; but, while she deeply regretted that she should be obliged to disobey her commands, steadily persisted in her determination. She expressed her uneasiness at being obliged to oppose her ladyship's wishes, but declared she was so circumstanced she could not break the promise she had made.

" Go, at your peril ! " said Lady Wyedale, shutting the door in her face.

Felicia wept; but Rosalind's honour — Rosalind's happiness — required the sacrifice, and, at her peril, she went.

It was a bitter cold morning, early in the frigid month of January. The sun, shrouded in snow-clouds, threw a sickly gleam of pale light over the dusky atmosphere. A shrill wind blew keenly through the streets; and, as she wrapped her cloak around her shivering form, Felicia felt her heart more than usually depressed.

Rosalind was scarcely ready for their proposed ride; and, while putting on her pelisse, Felicia surveyed, with increasing despondency, the splendid mansion of which she was mistress.

Lofty mirrors reflected in varied forms its superb decorations. The rarest exotics breathed incense. Indian cabinets and inlaid tables were covered with costly trifles of every description; while children's toys of the most expensive quality mingled with painted caricatures, musical boxes, and every other bauble which folly or fashion could invent to gratify a capricious or a frivolous taste.

Evanmore, unconscious of the motive of Felicia's visit, and half hoping it ominous of Lady Wyedale's gradual return to complacency, tried to surmount the constraint he always involuntarily felt when he saw her; and, gratified by her kindness, prepared for his drive with unwonted pleasure. He was momentarily surprised at their selecting the parks and principal squares as the scene of their morning's amusement; but, unsuspecting that they had secret reasons for such an exhibition of their persons, drove them where they directed, without questioning their choice.

Rosalind gaily laughed and talked. Her spirits were relieved from a heavy load by Felicia's acquiescence; and, now positive that Evanmore would be kept in ignorance of this attack on her character, felt as light-hearted as though it had never been made. Such at least were her feelings on commencing her ride: towards its close they underwent some alteration. On their return, they passed through the street where Mr. Osborne now resided. She instinctively threw her eyes upon the house which might have been her own. He was standing at the window, talking with Mrs. Hustleton, and, attracted by the sound of the wheels, looked down: their eyes met, and she saw his glance was equally that of surprise and contempt. No love—no disappointment, lurked under his smile—it was one of ineffable, unmixed disdain. She perceived that her power was departed—felt that he had learnt to regard their separation with pleasure.

We may rise superior to misfortune—we may laugh at injury; but in the idea of being despised there is a bitterness which we cannot conquer. Mortified, if not abashed, she hastily remarked that it was very cold, and desired Evanmore to return home.

To Felicia it was a welcome mandate, for she had long perceived they were the subject of universal attention and suppressed curiosity. With shrinking delicacy she once covered her face with her veil; but remembering that this painful exhibition was in great measure intended to prove her attachment to her sister, she again uncovered her features; and though blushing at the degrading situation in which she felt she was placed, resolved to brave its unpleasantness.

Dinner was ready when they reached Baker Street; and if she had before been surprised at the elegance of the drawing-room, how much more was she grieved with that of the saloon! The sideboard was crowded with plate and the richest glass, and the dinner served with a profusion quite equal to that of Lady Wyedale. Felicia's heart sunk within her; and, unable to re-

press her emotions, she gave Rosalind a look of sorrow and reproach. Rosalind understood it; but was just at that moment too sensible of a change in Evanmore's features to pay it much attention. They were on the point of sitting down to dinner; and, as he saw Felicia standing by the side of his table, while her sister prepared to preside at its head, he felt a sudden influx of feelings and recollections that dyed his face with crimson. His blush did not escape the notice of either, and both penetrated into its cause. Felicia, whose eye had followed Rosalind's, felt hardly able to preserve the semblance of composure; and Rosalind became painfully alive to the awkwardness of their several situations.

The dinner passed in almost silence. Evanmore vainly endeavoured to shake off his embarrassment. Felicia, though she soon resumed her usual equability of manner, felt a weight on her spirits that precluded the possibility of her being lively; and Rosalind, while trying to appear gay, unconcerned, and happy, found that it was an effort to her to speak. The dessert brought with it no relief. Rosalind, with her usual thoughtlessness, rang for the child, to divert the oppression under which they all laboured; and not till she saw the glow that mantled on Felicia's face as she received it into her arms, was sensible that she had selected the best means of prolonging their present sensations.

Felicia fruitlessly sought to recover herself—to appear indifferent—to act the sister—she was a visitor in that house which ought to have been her own—the guest of him who ought to have been her husband—and, though her pure spirit was unsullied by a single thought inimical to her own or Rosalind's honour, she felt it was a trial of no light magnitude. Her efforts to personate the aunt were still less successful. The smiling infant was now transformed into the lively, playful, lovely child of nearly two years. Every motion was a spring, every step a bound. She could just articulate in the broken sounds of infantile sweetness a few easy words; and, attracted by the mildness of Felicia's features and voice, refused to quit her arms at Rosalind's request. "Aunt," too, was a new term, and delighted with its acquisition, she repeated it again and again. Felicia felt all the aunt, but she could not—scarcely, indeed, dared to—appear so, for the features of infancy had already lost their unmeaning character, and assumed a strong resemblance to Evanmore's. She had Rosalind's complexion and eyes; but the placid expression of the mouth and brow, the gentle turn of the countenance, the *tout ensemble* were her father's. As the likeness gradually became more perceptible, Felicia tried to disengage herself from her embrace; but Rosa inherited a small portion of the spirit of her mamma, and clasping her little ivory arms around her neck, she refused to be removed. Evanmore darted to the bell.

"Tell nurse to come and take her away," he said to the footman.

Nurse came.—"Take her away, nurse!" he repeated.

Nurse's efforts were however unavailing. Little Rosa tightly maintained her grasp, and the contest bid fair to end in a cry. Evanmore grew palpably excited.

Felicia bowed to her sister, and rose to leave the room: Rosalind gladly obeyed the intimation, and Evanmore with a hurried air opened the door. As Felicia passed him with averted head, carrying his child clasped in her arms, he felt a sensation so strange, so indefinitely wretched, that, seizing a bottle which stood near him, he determined to drown it in wine. He had noticed Felicia's gentle attempt to resign the child. Her mind, her soul, her heart had so long lain open to his inspection, he could read her every thought, and he saw it proceeded from a scrupulous fear of encouraging too strong an affection for *his* child. Again, he filled his glass, and again the same undefined feeling of regret with which he had first beheld her, that she was lost to him—that he had voluntarily resigned her, shot through his heart.

But Evanmore was not designed for a man of pleasure. Errors seldom passed unnoticed by him, and the pain he usually experienced in refusing to sacrifice his better principles to the suggestion of others less fastidious, was doubled by that which followed his deviation from right. And the pleasure he felt in yielding to temptation was so little adequate to the remorse he endured at having been overcome, that, finding the contest inexpressibly painful, he tried to think it unnecessary. Still, on all essential points, he remained firm as adamant; and, aware that the spirit of a commandment may be violated, while the letter remains uninjured, once more a blush of shame passed over his features. He loved Rosalind also with unaffected sincerity, though her boundless extravagance, and headstrong flippant conduct, had lately been the source of many unpleasant altercations between them; and, after each, he felt her become less dear to him. There was, indeed, in Rosalind's manner a light, airy impertinence, a cutting sarcastic something, peculiarly calculated to annoy a man of his shrinking sensitive feelings. He had likewise been deeply hurt at her renewing her intimacy with Lord Edgermond; for though his self-love, and his high opinion of her honour, made him entirely unapprehensive of her forgetting what was due to either, he felt provoked and mortified that she should receive with pleasure the attentions of a man, who was but too sensible that she had once loved him.

On this subject Rosalind was, however, determined not to accede to his wishes. She had gone to Brighton on purpose to convince Lord Edgermond she did not care for him, and the scheme ended just as might have been expected. His lordship was among the first to call and wish her joy; made an allusion to his own situation just strong enough to point out that he was indissolubly bound by a disagreeable engagement, and then left her, after having succeeded in convincing her he could not have made her his wife, however he might have wished it.

A celebrated French author has said, though vanity overturn not the virtues, it certainly makes them totter.

Let not, then, vanity any longer be ranked as a trifling error, which age will correct; or a natural weakness, deserving of pity rather than censure. Ere time shall bring the antidote, vanity may have poured out its vial of miseries; and the weakness we compassionate may lead to the vices we abhor.

Rosalind felt her pride a little soothed by this implied confession of the power of her personal attractions, and while she remained true to her husband, even in thought, gradually learnt to see him without anger or resentment. The ice thus broken, his lordship often called; and Evanmore ashamed of betraying anything like jealousy, or unwillingness to admit him as an acquaintance, at length tacitly acquiesced in the renewal of their former intimacy, hoping it would terminate when they returned to town. He was consequently much chagrined, when, a few weeks after they reached Baker Street, his lordship called, and announced that his attendance on Parliament would make him a resident in London for the winter, though his uncle and cousin would remain in the country. Still he could not summon resolution to expose himself to Rosalind's laughter or resentment, by openly forbidding his visits; but his dislike was sufficiently apparent to her, and had been the occasion of many a biting word and scornful look. She was indignant at his presuming to dictate to her on such a subject. She felt confident her own former predilection had merged into a pure platonic friendship, and persuaded herself that his lordship's had undergone the same change. She was flattered by his delicate attentions, and resolved not to yield to the whim of a man, whom she now esteemed almost as fastidious and superstitiously devoted to forms, ceremonies, and religion, as her sister. Yet his amiable character had so far strengthened her former prepossession in his favour, that she felt convinced she loved him better than all the world beside; and assured, if he would only learn to be less tiresomely particular and scrupulous, and had fortunately been a good deal richer, she should not have a wish ungratified.

"I can never express my sense of your disinterested kindness to me, dearest Philly," said she, when they found themselves alone in the drawing-room. "I think all the old backbiting wretches must now be completely disappointed; and I could not certainly, without your contrivance and wisdom, have kept Evanmore in ignorance of the scandalous machinations of that young incendiary. And I would not have had him know them for the universe. 'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise,' was the opinion of a sage, and I am sure, never could such an aphorism apply better than in this instance; for with quick feelings, he has a painful susceptibility to the opinion of the world; and though I know he is a very good sort of a man on the main, and would not, perhaps, use all the vehemence and gesticulation on

such an occasion that many men might, yet he is apt to make up in the *quantity* of his words what they want in bitterness of quality; and of all things I abhor dissertations on what cannot be helped. I never could bear variations to any piece of music. Cramer and Latour might have starved for me. Perhaps it arose from what Locke terms a concatenation of ideas, and their perpetual recurrence to the same air, sometimes drawing into *adagio*, sometimes branching into *allegro*, sometimes dying away in *arpeggio*, but still always reverting to the original theme, by reminding me of the changes Lady Wyedale delighted to ring on every trifling dispute, rendered them odious. The favourite maxim of a favourite monarch, 'Repeat no grievances,' ought to be suspended in gold letters over everybody's mantelpiece. By-the-by, though not at all suited to you, that said King Charley was a merry wight, and I've a notion my degenerate nature would have liked him vastly."

"I am extremely concerned to hear you make such a declaration," said Felicia. "I should have supposed few persons could feel anything bordering on liking for so profligate and unprincipled a man. The compassion with which I am inclined to regard the rest of the Stuart family I cannot extend to him. In every relative situation of life he was equally undeserving of esteem: a bad monarch, a bad man, a bad husband, ungrateful to his friends, unimproved by that great, though stern, friend of mankind, adversity."

"Oh! no doubt his martyr father is infinitely more to your taste."

"Infinitely. Yet while I love the man, I am not insensible to the faults of the king; and with my unfeigned pity for his undeserved fate, is mingled regret that he did not possess a firmer mind; that he yielded, in short, too much to a wife, whose imprudent counsels at length proved his destruction."

"So you would not permit the opinion of a wife to influence her husband in the smallest degree?"

"On the contrary, I think it should always be listened to with attention; but never implicitly followed. Women are often endowed with great taste, invention, quickness of intellect, and aptitude to acquire learning; but it is an indisputable fact, that they are not so often born with judgment, with the solid ballast of sense, as men; and though nothing is more pleasing, or manifests a more amiable disposition in a husband, than deference to the sentiments of his wife, he should never yield to her wishes when he knows that compliance will, in all human probability, be injurious to the future interest of both. If he has reason to suspect she is involving him in expenses which he cannot conveniently meet, or associating with persons whose intimacy will detract from her respectability and diminish the happiness of both, he ought then, however repugnant to his feelings, to interfere, and steadily forbid whatever may tend to such fatal results."

"The human mind is as full of variations as the human form ; and that which may act as a medicine to some constitutions, operates like poison on others. I can only say, had I been in Henrietta Maria's place, I should have been exceedingly wrathful if Charles the First had set me at defiance. And if Evanmore were officiously to interfere with my pursuits, I should, I assure you, see him with different feelings from those with which I now regard him."

"At the time, possibly. But those sentiments would have subsided, or rather changed into deep anguish, when you subsequently found his ill-judged measures had deprived him of life, and both of the crown to which you were mutually born. And if hereafter you should find Mr. Evanmore's unwillingness to give you present pain has led him into embarrassments from which he cannot extricate himself with honour or convenience, you will then deplore his false kindness. Forgive my speaking to you so often and so openly on this subject, dearest Rosalind," she continued, seeing a flush of, she feared, resentment mantle over her sister's face ; "you know my motive—you know my anxiety for your welfare."

"Yes, did I not——"

"Nay, do not menace ; even if I were not your sister you must feel sensible that I could not but have your interest in view. It grows late, I must leave you ; promise me, then, you will remember what has passed this day and yesterday, and I shall leave you in peace, though my reception from Lady Wyedale I cannot, dare not, conjecture."

Rosalind looked really concerned. Felicia had not before alluded to Lady Wyedale's displeasure ; and aware that it could be of no light nature, or she would never have mentioned it, she felt sincere regret.

"I am truly sorry you should have incurred her resentment on my account," she at length said ; "but as to promising I will recollect the injuries of my enemies as a penance, not being a good Romanist, I really cannot accede to your wishes. We have once before touched on this topic, and I must own how you who are a philosopher and a Christian, as you call it, by which I understand a person who is resigned to all manner of ills, can think it right or rational that we should torment ourselves either by retrospection or anticipation, is beyond my comprehension. I am sure when I suffer such provoking things to dwell upon my mind it makes me very cross ; and that alone must prove the folly and impolicy of doing so."

"The recollection of past errors makes us careful not to commit fresh faults. And the injustice of our acquaintance should be remembered, not from a spirit of resentment, but a desire to prevent the possibility of being again exposed to their unkindness by the smallest inadvertence on our part."

"Perhaps so ; but even if I did comply with your request, no

good would follow my obedience; for the time I always call my sins to remembrance is, when I am at home and alone, and cannot be wicked or silly if I would. In company I never think of anything of the kind; lights, music, cards, dancing, promenading, and so on, invariably displace every melancholy compunctions feeling."

"Then you should refrain, my dear Rosalind, from often indulging in scenes, which, by your own confession, tend to nourish your follies, and drown the warning voice of conscience."

"Not I, truly. The more dismal I feel, the more I shall try to shake off the load.

"One little hour of joy to me
Is worth a dull Eternity."

Felicia's eyes filled with tears. "Oh, Rosalind, you know not what you say!—Of this be assured, the load will never be removed by such attempts: it may be lightened for a transient period, as the opiate which raises the spirits to delirium, or sinks them into stupefaction, mitigates the pang of bodily suffering; but its weight will hourly increase, till it becomes intolerable—perhaps unmoveable."

"I shall not seek to lose it in a Conventicle!" said Rosalind, superciliously.

I do not wish you should, while the doors of the Established Church are open."

The entrance of Evanmore forbid any further argument; and after taking a hasty cup of coffee, Felicia, with a heart sad on Rosalind's account, and fluttering on her own, set off in Evanmore's carriage for Portman Square.

CHAP. XIII.

"Domestic Happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise, that hast survived the fall!
Though few now taste thee unimpaired and pure,
Or tasting, long enjoy thee I too infirm,
Or too incautious, to preserve thy sweets
Unmixed with drops of bitter, which neglect
Or temper sheds into thy crystal cup;
Thou art the nurse of Virtue."

COWPER.

THE lapse of time is, perhaps, seldom less perceptible than in the metropolis. There an incessant routine of business or pleasure so rapidly occupies every coming hour, that the passing minutes of the day seem gifted with unnatural fleetness. After some weeks of haughty reserve and bitter sarcasm, Felicia was again restored to Lady Wyedale's favour; and three months had elapsed almost unobserved since the visit to Rosalind; when she was one morning aroused from the quiescent tran-

quality in which she now spent her time, by Mr. Leycester's requesting to speak with her in private. His tone, his look, his embarrassed hesitating manner, were each remarked with trembling anxiety, and fearful of she scarcely knew what, she followed him into a breakfast parlour.

"I hope, I trust, you will forgive me, if I am infringing on a promise I once tacitly made you, my dear cousin!" said he, as he closed the door.

Felicia felt very faint.

"Don't, pray don't alarm yourself unnecessarily," said he, in a voice of less constraint. "I assure you I have nothing of any great moment to reveal, but my regard for you and my cousin, my natural interest in whatever concerns any branch of the Leycester family, induced me to—to—" He paused.

"Speak!" said Felicia, in a broken voice; "and tell me the worst."

"Dearest Felicia! my beloved cousin!" and he took her trembling hand. "I beseech you——"

"Do not trifle with my agony," said she, hastily withdrawing it, regardless of his endeavours to retain its possession; "tell me, tell me all."

"I have nothing to relate that needs thus terrify you; only — only — that — that Mrs. Evanmore is undoubtedly more in the society of Lord Edgermond than can be agreeable to her husband; and I fear, unless she soon resigns so disreputable an intimacy, will be irretrievably injured in the estimation of the world. I learnt this only a few hours ago, and, anxious to save her from further censure, resolved to brave your displeasure, by communicating it without delay, that you may warn her. She must, she will, at your request, at your entreaty, relinquish this imprudent acquaintance, and by retiring for a short time from London, silence the many busy rumours which the malice of her enemies has too industriously propagated. I fear, I fear, I have offended you," said he, his voice changing as he spoke; "but yet, let my motive plead my apology. Do not, I implore——"

Felicia caught his hand, and bathed it in the tears that now flowed over her face. "Heaven bless and reward you!" she at length articulated. "This is, indeed, an act of real friendship." She rose from her chair. "I must be gone. My poor thoughtless Rosalind! where—when will her imprudence find its termination!"

Mr. Leycester made an effort to detain her; but unconscious of every thing excepting the idea of Rosalind's danger, she flew out of the apartment, put on her bonnet, and commenced her walk to Baker Street.

From the first moment that she had learnt of the renewal of Rosalind's intercourse with Lord Edgermond, she had so earnestly and repeatedly conjured her by letter to discontinue it

that she feared her present remonstrances would be attended with little success. Still she determined to make another effort; and while she dreaded that it might produce some unpleasant altercation between them, resolved to brave her displeasure,—encounter her reproaches, without a moment's delay.

Her heart beating equally from apprehension, grief, and anxiety, she rapped at the door. She felt these sensations increase, when the servant said his mistress was from home, in a tone that contradicted the assertion. "She is at home to me," said she, pressing into the hall. The man made no reply, but he seemed unwilling to introduce her; and without stopping, Felicia sought Rosalind in her own dressing-room. As she approached the door, she heard her voice mingling with Evanmore's. They were in loud and angry debate. She shrunk back with alarm, and was on the point of retreating; but the fear of being thought a spy should she be discovered while listening, and the desire to interrupt such a conference, surmounted the first impulse, and, tremulous from agitation, she knocked at the door. There was a pause within.

"May I enter?" she asked, in a voice of assumed cheerfulness. No answer was made, but a door closed violently; and in a moment afterwards Rosalind appeared.

"Don't be afraid of coming in," she said, as Felicia half lingered on the threshold; "Evanmore is fled. I suppose you have heard some of the silver tones in which matrimonial dialogues are carried on!" she continued, internally conscious Felicia must have heard sufficient, in ascending the stairs, to inform her that Evanmore and herself were in the midst of a dispute.

Felicia's melancholy silence confirmed the supposition, and a pause of some moments followed. It was broken by Felicia's calmly but energetically revealing the cause of her visit.

Rosalind listened with ill-disguised impatience and displeasure. She first affected to disbelieve that her conduct was the subject of animadversion, and then proudly declared, that she would never be influenced by the opinion of a party of malevolent calumniators, to relinquish the acquaintance of a pleasant gentlemanly man. "I will not, like you," she cried, haughtily, "be an abject slave to the opinion of others."

"I am not, most assuredly, insensible to the estimation in which I am held by my fellow-creatures; and once even you might have despised their censures with less danger and criminality than now. You were then the sole arbitress of your destiny—the sole guardian of your own name—now you are answerable for that of a husband also. It is not sufficient that you know you have not abused the sacred trust he has committed to you; the world must also be assured you have preserved it inviolable. However really innocent, the moment a married woman is suspected, she is always deemed guilty, not, perhaps, of vice,

but something that has tended to levity, or bordered on imprudence."

"Really, your conversation consists so entirely of aphorisms, and rules for the wise conduct of life, it becomes too learned and refined for me. And all that I shall say is simply, I will not deprive myself of the innocent pleasure arising from the acquaintance of a man I have known for years, merely because I am married."

"Were I married, I should feel no pleasure in the society of any man but my husband; and if his limited income required it, could be happy to reside in the most perfect obscurity."

"Oh! no doubt," said Rosalind, dryly; "your purity, your prudence, would make even a cottage enchanting."

"It is Lord Edgermond's character that renders his friendship so peculiarly destructive to your fame," replied Felicia, her eyes suffused with tears, as this sarcasm met her ear.

"What can be said of him more than may be alleged against twenty others? He is, indeed, gay, and probably a latitudinarian in his opinions on those subjects where you are a ——" She stopped, but Felicia felt that she had meant to have said bigot.

"I can apply no such qualifying epithets to crimes so wide in extent, and deep in dye," said she; "and I lament that you should behold them with so little regret."

"Do not find so much fault!" said Rosalind, peevishly. "It is intolerably provoking to hear ourselves so incessantly the subject of lamentation or reproof. I am no egotist, but really you are so fastidious, so wondrous delicate, it is impossible to avoid feeling displeased."

"A wish for the happiness and honour of Mr. Evanmore and yourself, has alone prompted those admonitions which seem to have given you so much offence."

"Evanmore's happiness and honour! Oh, now I perceive the occasion of your zeal: it springs from the spirit of departed affection! Hey?"

There was a mixture of bitterness and pleasantry, of malice, and want of womanly and sisterly delicacy, in this speech, that stung Felicia to the quick: she started, but trying to restrain her emotions, said, with quivering lips, "True! the spirit of departed affection for an old friend mingled with present attachment to a beloved sister."

Rosalind blushed deeply, and turned away her head, that she might not meet the calm but mournful gaze of a sister she felt she had so cruelly insulted. But though an involuntary flush of shame crimsoned her cheek, she resolved to hush her rising scruples. She felt she was to blame, and was determined to share her fault with some one — determined to believe Felicia's unwarrantable censures and teasing importunities had justly entitled her to feel offended, to return insult for impertinence. It was broken by Felicia's rising from her chair.

been so long struggling to restrain now rolled over her face. "My own, my own Rosalind again!" she sobbed.

The door suddenly opened, and Evanmore entered. He regarded them a moment with looks of blended astonishment and indignation.

"Oh, Felicia!" he cried, in a voice of tender interest, springing towards them. "Rosalind, what is the meaning of this?" he asked in a quick, apprehensive tone.

Rosalind turned on him a face of haughty defiance, and walked to the window.

Rage lighted up his features. "Have you so far trampled on the rights of hospitality, on the ties of gratitude, as to insult *her* in your own——" He could not say house, the word died on his lips.

"Mine are not the tears of sorrow," said Felicia, hastily brushing them away, and smiling as she spoke. "My dearest sister——"

Evanmore stayed to hear no more; clasping his hands over his face, he flew out of the room; and Felicia, alike terrified at this scene, and distressed at being the cause of it, soon afterwards bade Rosalind adieu. "Promise me you will explain this misconception," said she, "to Mr. Evanmore. Tell him my tears were caused by your sisterly kindness——that nothing of a painful nature had passed between us. Tell him so."

"No," said Rosalind, sullenly. "He has accused me unjustly, and I disdain to clear myself from his aspersion."

Felicia saw it was vain to contend; yet she felt reluctant to leave him under an unfavourable impression of his wife, and she was half determining to write him a short note, when, as she passed through the hall, she saw him sitting in an adjoining breakfast-parlour, his head leaning on his hand. She stopped, and hesitated; they were alone—for Rosalind had omitted to ring for the attendance of a servant to conduct her to the door. It was less formal to speak than write to him; and bashfully advancing into the room, she said in a soft voice, "Mr. Evanmore." He started from the reverie in which he was buried; and, as he raised his head, she saw he was weeping.

Tears are the natural expression of feminine grief, or feminine tenderness; but the sterner mind of man revolts from such an indulgence of his feelings; and the consciousness that they are wrung by the intensest anguish, renders them peculiarly affecting. Felicia shrunk back with sensations scarcely less acute. For a moment, she remembered nothing, saw nothing, but Evanmore in affliction—in tears—she wished to fly, but she felt she had gone too far to recede; and, schooling her fluttering heart, she said, with assumed calmness, "I wish to tell you, my dear brother, that Rosalind and myself have had no misunderstanding; my tears were caused by her affection, not her unkindness."

He looked at her with mournful emotion. "Always the same!" he said, in a low inward voice. She turned from him to leave the room.

"Stay one moment!" said he, hastily rising from his seat. "Perhaps I may appear harsh — violent: she probably tells you I am so, but you know not what I endure. Oh! if you could induce her to become more, more — more like — more —"

Felicia felt her situation inexpressibly embarrassing. "I am very sorry," she said, in a hurried voice, "but, indeed, you must endeavour to conciliate her. Great allowances must be made for one so young, so lovely, so accustomed to adulation. Try, by increased attention, and augmented attachment, to win her back to the pleasures of home."

"Oh! Felicia," he cried, "what can I do to express my sense of your kindness, your —" He paused from overwhelming agitation; and, scarcely conscious of what he did, was advancing towards her, when the half-open door flew back with violence on its hinges, and Rosalind appeared. Her eyes sparkled with passion, while her mouth and every feature was expressive of rage, contempt, and derision. She stood for a moment, and then bursting into a scornful laugh, was turning to leave them, when Evanmore rushed towards her, and caught her arm. She tore it from him with a look of silent detestation. "As for you," she said, fixing her flashing eyes on the petrified Felicia, "as for you, who can thus reconcile it to yourself — to your delicacy — your conscience —"

"Breathe not a word against her angel purity," said Evanmore, in a paroxysm of resentment and shame, grasping her arm with frantic violence, and shaking it convulsively — "At your peril insult her! She sought me to mediate between us — to intercede —"

"Her situation peculiarly qualifies her to act the part of a mediatrix between *you* and *me*," said Rosalind, while malice, jealousy, and contempt lighted up her glowing complexion.

"Rosalind," said Felicia, stopping for an instant as she calmly passed before her to quit the room, "when you know me better — when you can appreciate me as I feel I ought to be appreciated — we will meet again. Farewell!" She turned back her head, and gracefully bowing to Evanmore, descended the stairs with the firm step of conscious rectitude.

Evanmore darted after her, utterly regardless of Rosalind's withering glance as he fled by her. "Oh! what shall I say?" he cried, "What, what shall I do?"

"Return to my sister," said she, calmly. "Tell her that I sought you, perhaps imprudently, to undeceive you; to point out that she had not been to blame. And —" she stopped, and her voice lost its firmness, "if you would see her such as she has been, forget her little errors. Remember only what she has sacrificed for your sake; that she loves you, dearly loves you, has been just evinced by this strange scene. Hers is not a spirit that will bear reproach or recrimination. You are the best judge of the necessity of those reforms and retrenchments which I have

— have heard are the occasion of your dissensions ; but let your manner be free from irritation. Oh ! treat her with undiminished regard — increased tenderness — think what she forfeited for you !”

She eagerly opened the hall door as she spoke, and, without looking at him, sprang into the street.

CHAP. XIV.

“ ——— My love, my life,
And — nature's dearest name — my wife.” LOGAN.

A WELL-DIRECTED heart easily surmounts misfortune ; but from insult it will shrink with that intuitive feeling which neither religion nor philosophy can ever eradicate. It was long ere Felicia could recover from the shock this distressing scene left on her spirits. The fortitude, the equanimity, she had preserved while the interview lasted, deserted her, when no longer obliged to act a part to lull Evanmore into tranquillity. She wept at the degradation she had incurred, the insult she had received ; and the blow was rendered additionally bitter, by the recollection of her whose hand had so cruelly pointed it to her heart.

It is the *unkindness* of those we *love* which inflicts the deep wound that scarcely time will heal ; whose bitterness, when infused into the cup of life, no earthly medicament can mitigate. Lady Wyedale's insults, sneers, reproaches, and indifference, she had lamented, but only as those minor afflictions which fall to the lot of all to endure. It was Rosalind's that lacerated — Rosalind's that stung her to the soul ; and hopeless of being able to effect any alterations in her sentiments, feeling that she could not visit her with any propriety, some weeks elapsed without her hearing any thing of them. She had flattered herself, Rosalind, when she became sensible of her injustice, would write to her, entreat her forgiveness, and petition for a renewal of their correspondence. She was ignorant that the heart which has once admitted an improper attachment necessarily becomes deadened to every other — that the claims of kindred — the ties of life must press faintly and coldly on the spirit that can even in thought meditate on their violation.

“ Are you expecting an offer of marriage, Miss Leycester ? ” asked Lady Wyedale one morning, as Felicia, starting at the well known sound of the postman's rap, hastened towards the door, to be ready to receive the letters.

“ No madam,” she replied, her face flushing with surprise and confusion.

“ Then I suppose it must be some delayed homily, or sermonette from Berkely Manor which occasions you the nervous

trepidation I have lately remarked in you on the arrival of letters, for I know of no other quarter from whence you can anticipate them."

Felicia made no rejoinder to this sneer, but it taught her to control her impatience, and her future examination of the contents of the silver salver on which the footman presented letters, was outwardly at least composed. Vainly, however, she secretly hoped from day to day that Rosalind would write her a few words of returning affection—none such realised her eager anxious anticipation, and she was beginning to fear a total alienation would take place between them, when one morning, while sitting dejectedly at work in the drawing-room, with Lady Wyedale, a tremendous rap made them both start. Felicia involuntarily laid down her work, and Lady Wyedale was beginning to vent her spleen at the thoughtlessness and inhumanity with which those who were well, treated those who were ill, as the hasty tread of rapid feet mounting the stairs arrested their attention. She stopped—neither breathed—the spring of the lock yielded to the pressure of some violent hand—the door burst open, and Evanmore appeared. His face was deadly pale, his eye wild, bloodshot, and glaring; regardless of Lady Wyedale's terror and amazement, he sprung towards Felicia. "Where is she?" he cried. "Where is Rosalind?"

Felicia was unable to reply. Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth, her bounding heart seemed too large for its resting place.

"Have you seen her this morning?" he asked, in a low fearful voice, as he grasped her trembling hand, and fixed his straining eyeballs on her face.

"No," she said, while her white and nerveless lips almost refused to articulate the word.

He stood a moment still, and cold as a marble statue—his parted lips quivering with agony—his eyes fixed and glassy—then dropped her hand, staggered a few paces, and fell to the ground.

Felicia remained riveted to the spot on which she stood, a fearful sickness stole over her motionless heart, a cold dew over-spread her forehead, her eyes were bent on the death-like figure of Evanmore, as pale and senseless he lay stretched on the floor; and a dim mist was gradually rendering even this terrible object obscure, when a frightful shriek from Lady Wyedale recalled her wandering senses. She started, and rushed forward to receive her as she fell from her chair.

Here was no deceit, no hypocrisy. Lady Wyedale's pallid complexion and icy touch spoke her situation—betrayed her internal suffering; and roused by terror to the exercise of her reason, Felicia rung the bell, desired her aunt might be removed immediately to her room, and a physician sent for without a moment's delay. She next turned to Evanmore. "My aunt

cannot now deny thee a shelter!" she murmured, in a stifled voice; and commanding her anguish she directed that he should be carried to an apartment.

Lady Wyedale soon recovered from the temporary insensibility into which she had sunk, as a dark suspicion, which she scarcely dared to pursue, flashed over her mind; but Evanmore was many hours in a state bordering on dissolution. Forgetful of all but that he was ill and in misery, Felicia hung over his couch, and anxiously administered to him such restoratives as Lady Wyedale's physician prescribed. Vain, however, was the attempt to restore animation. The spirit had been scared from its mansion by the deepest injury, the keenest woe man can endure; and as she gazed on the livid circle round the strongly compressed mouth; the fixed and glaring eye, the stiffened limbs, the fearful traces which yet remained of that agony of feeling which had thus subdued the vital spark of life, she half breathed a silent prayer that he might wake no more to life. "The struggle is past," she said, in a low voice. "Oh that he might sleep the sleep of death! And Rosalind——" she shuddered; again the same deadly sensation chilled her throbbing heart; and wringing her hands wildly together, she sunk on a sofa, overwhelmed by the ideas that crowded to her tortured imagination.

From this state of almost unconsciousness, this trance of waking sorrow, she was roused by a cry so deep—so piercing—so strange—she started; and while every limb trembled with horror, she saw Evanmore bending over her. His eyes were fixed on hers, and, as she met their fearful glance, its frenzied expression thrilled terror through her heart.

"Rosalind is gone!" said he, in a hollow voice. "She fled from me last night. You have no sister—I have no wife—my child no mother!"—A deep groan burst from her ashy lips. He looked at her a moment in speechless anguish. "Oh, had she spared me this last pang; but to be deserted, disgraced, dishonoured!" He struck his throbbing temples with the clenched hand of agony; darted from the house, and rushed into the Square. Rain, mingled with snow, fell in torrents; a bleak wind whistled through the streets, and blew around his uncovered head. But Evanmore was unmindful of all but that Rosalind had abandoned him. He felt not the storm—was insensible to the howling blast. He had lost the wife of his bosom—the protectress of his honour—the mother of his infant; and alternately covered with burning blushes of shame and resentment, or torn by the conflicting passions of blighted love, of bitter revenge, he flew to his deserted mansion, a prey to the direst feelings, the acutest pangs which can goad the heart of man.

CHAP. XV.

"But is it she? Oh! yes: the rose is dead,
 Its beauty, fragrance, freshness, glory fled:
 But yet 'tis she—the same and not the same
 Who to my bower an heavenly being came."

CRABBE.

THAT which will ever influence a woman devotedly attached to her husband, the desire of being more pleasing in his eyes than those of any other;—that regard for his person, esteem for his understanding, which will sometimes supply the place of better motives, and produce that behaviour in a wife which ought to spring from principle, Rosalind had never felt for Evanmore. Coquetry, the love of power, commingled with various other reasons and feelings, had made her esteem him a conquest of some value, but he was not the man to excite her real love, or retain her respect.

Unhappily, Rosalind's mind was calculated neither for the moderate enjoyments of domestic life, nor the tranquil happiness of married love. Gifted with strong passions herself, she saw no shade between the transports of romantic attachment and the callous induration of morbid indifference. She had been accustomed to hear herself called an angel, to perceive herself the object of adoration, till it became treason to hint that she was mortal, to see her without rapture; and the unimpassioned tenderness, the gentleness of Evanmore's attentions, seemed, to her vitiated imagination, rather insults to the omnipotence of her charms, than incense offered to their shrine. Still the first two years of their marriage passed tolerably happily. Evanmore, indeed, sometimes complained of her expenses, and remonstrated against her gaiety, but his complaints were always couched in the language of affection, or clothed in gentle flattery, and she heard them without any sensation but that of weariness. Since, however, their fatal excursion to Brighton, the mind of each had undergone a change which gave a different colour to their mutual feelings. Of Lord Edgermond she had, from the instant he disappointed and deceived her while there with Lady Wyedale two summers before, determined to think no more, and even after they again met, she persisted in her resolution.

But it is more difficult for a coquette to abstain from the indulgence of her favourite passion, than to conquer that attachment which gave it birth. She was then, for the first time, exposed to temptation; and as it is seldom that great virtues are very conspicuous in those who neglect the lesser ones, or the road to self-government is made at one bound from that of self-indulgence, the same lures once more overpowered the feeble bulwark which pride, not virtue, had raised against their intimacy. She returned to town still pure in mind, but her regard for Evanmore had visibly declined. At this dangerous period his remonstrances

became daily more serious. Alverston House, after expending considerable sums in advertisements, remained unlet. It was a large, old-fashioned, ill-contrived building, too spacious for the estate, and little likely to be interesting to persons uninfluenced by family feelings or local prejudices. The estate was entailed on a male heir, and, as such, incapable of being either sold, dismembered, or heavily mortgaged. He had always lived up to his income; and though the death of his mother, he had hoped, would a little relieve his embarrassments, he found it weighed only as a feather against the extravagance of his wife. Her own fortune was dissipated in the various losses he sustained by changing and furnishing the houses in which he had so imprudently speculated; and terrified at his situation, regretting his former supineness, and his unwillingness to oppose her wishes, he insisted upon such a reduction in their establishment and expenditure as would once more make him independent. Rosalind heard him with astonishment and indignation.

Her wants had hitherto been so regularly and profusely supplied, that though she had occasionally experienced a few days' inconvenience after some act of unbounded extravagance, she had never known what it was to feel any real deprivation, make any real sacrifice, or encounter any real difficulty; and she received his assurance that she must now learn to live within a narrow income, with as much resentment and impatient surprise, as though he had possessed the mines of Peru; and, from a cruel desire to insult and ill-treat her, was determined to shut them from her use.

Educated in habits of show and expense, and wholly unacquainted with economical calculation, she would neither endure the idea of submitting to the smallest privation, nor could be made to understand the absolute necessity which required it. She protested that she would not be debarred from every common enjoyment of life, would not consent to forfeit her station in society, by sacrificing her house in town, her carriage, and all those comforts she had possessed from her birth. Alike provoked at her folly, and exasperated at her impertinence, Evanmore met these puerile complainings, and perverse opposition to that which was the effect of necessity, not avarice, with open violence or sullen displeasure. His was not that vehemence, that effervescence of temper, which is easily roused into passion; but when a long series of injuries or mortifications had, at length, excited his indignation, the bitterness of his resentments and the strength of his feelings were scarcely less remarkable than his usual placidity. But though he could sometimes, when driven to desperation, threaten, rave, and recriminate, he did not possess energy of character sufficient to *persevere* in a course of firm opposition; and while the suspicious implication, the angry glance, the scornful reply, the biting personality, hourly undermined the slender fabric of their love, he had not fortitude to

assert the privileges of a husband, could not prevail upon himself to tear his imprudent wife from those luxuries, or that society, to which she attached so high a value. With one part of her misconduct he was, indeed, in great measure unacquainted. He abhorred her intimacy with Lord Edgermond, but he had no idea that it was lowering her in the opinion of the world. His situation as a husband precluded the probability of his hearing the rumours that were circulated at her expense; and in this fatal, but blissful, state of unconsciousness he remained till a few days prior to her elopement, when the blow fell upon him with a degree of suddenness and violence proportionable to his former security.

When Felicia presented to Rosalind the confession of Miss Beaumont, she happened to be sitting near a beautiful inlaid cabinet, which formed one of the principal ornaments of her drawing-room. Willing to change the conversation as quickly as possible, she immediately put it along with the newspaper which produced it into one of the private drawers, intending to remove it the instant Felicia left her. This intention was frustrated by the presence of Evanmore, who spent the evening at home; and, her mind relieved from all its previous anxiety, she never afterwards remembered to change its exposed situation for one more secure. Once or twice, indeed, she thought of it; but she was either in company, or preparing for company, or Evanmore was in the way, and, heedless as she was imprudent, both were suffered to remain where she had carelessly thrown them. She was dressing for the Opera when Evanmore sent to request a few sheets of writing paper. Too much engrossed by this important avocation to open her portfolio, she informed him, in a hasty message, that she believed he would find some in the Indian cabinet. Impatient of interruption, she then resumed her employment, and unconscious of her folly, was proudly surveying herself in a lofty mirror, when Evanmore, his face livid with horror, his voice mute with indignation, burst upon her. He had sought, as she directed him, in the cabinet for the paper he wanted, and not finding it in any of the open drawers, continued his search till he came to the private one containing those papers which had hitherto been preserved from his knowledge. They would have escaped his inspection, had he not seen, as he carelessly eyed them, "Last dying Speech and Confession of a detected Foolosopher," in Rosalind's hand, written on the back of Miss Beaumont's declaration with a lead pencil. He smiled, supposing it some little pedantic effusion of Miss Beaumont's, opened it to gratify his curiosity, and the following lines instantly met his blasted view:

"I, Lucretia Beaumont, do here solemnly declare, that I was impelled to insert the paragraph which appeared in yesterday's paper reflecting on the honour of Mrs. Evanmore, solely from private feelings of resentment against her, for having been the

author of a copy of verses calculated to render Mr. Flickerton and myself ridiculous. I am extremely sorry that I should have taken so cruel a revenge, and earnestly entreat she will forgive this unassisted, unjust libel on her fame.

“LUCRETIA BEAUMONT.

“Signed in the presence of
FELICIA LEYCESTER.”

Evanmore did not breathe, but with frantic eagerness seized on the accompanying newspaper. The fatal paragraph soon presented itself; and, in a moment, the flagrant impropriety of Rosalind's conduct in thus continuing to admit Lord Edgermond's attentions, the obloquy under which she laboured, were apparent to his tortured senses. With these agonising reflections arose the recollection of the part Felicia had borne in this disgraceful transaction. She had evidently been the person who had traced and wrung this confession from Miss Beaumont. He took a hasty survey of the past, and discovered that Felicia's first visit to his house, her first appearance with them in public, had been the day following this open attack on the reputation of her sister. Again he perused this everlasting stigma on the character of his wife. Its allusion to the situation in which he had once stood to Felicia—to her anguish at his desertion, stung him to almost madness; and as he rapidly contrasted them together, he twisted the paper with frantic violence between his trembling hands, and cursed the hour that had made him a husband.

Long, bitter, and terrible, was the scene that followed. Rosalind met his almost inarticulate reproaches and frantic threats with a proportionable degree of violence, or the deathly laugh of scorn; and goaded to fury, Evanmore's rage overleaped all the bounds of reason and decorum. Though she openly defied his power, Rosalind was secretly terrified at his transports, and she fled to the Opera, not more to assert her will, than escape his ungoverned ebullitions of passion. There she was met by Lord Edgermond. The remembrance of the scene from which she had just torn herself, threw a damp over her features and spirits, which she fruitlessly tried to shake off or conceal. His lordship rallied her on her depression, and exerted himself so successfully to remove it, that she returned to her wretched home yet more incensed against her exasperated husband.

The succeeding night and day were passed in profound and gloomy silence. Evanmore was too deeply wounded to make the most distant overtures towards a reconciliation, and Rosalind would have disdained to accept them had they been tendered. The evening was devoted to a private ball, given by Lady Clarinda Lovelace; but Evanmore, in the tumult of his feelings, had forgotten its destination; and not till he saw Rosalind step full-dressed into her carriage, did he know she meant to go from

home. As he beheld her seemingly unruffled brow, and the graceful care which marked the decorations of her lovely person, he execrated the cold callousness of a heart which could find pleasure in such sources at such a period ; and when he returned from the window to his solitary fire, the image of Felicia Leycester, sitting near its glowing flame, her work-table before her, employed in manufacturing some of those ingenious trifles which she appropriated to charitable purposes, or reading some work calculated to amend her heart and improve her taste, was his companion. He groaned as he dismissed this forbidden vision from his fancy. He was married to her sister, and though the down had been rudely brushed from the pinions of love; she was still dear to him. She had received his vows, had sacrificed to him the inheritance of her aunt, and matchless beauty of her person,—was the mother of his child ! He recalled to remembrance Felicia's advice and entreaties when they last met. "Hers is not a spirit that will bear reproach or recrimination—win her back by increased tenderness." Had he done so ? Alas ! no, the vial of his own disappointments and distresses were emptied on her head, so ill calculated to support the weight of a single earthly care. His heart softened by these remembrances, he determined to bury the past in oblivion, remove her from the scene of temptation, and by increased tenderness endeavour to atone for this opposition to her wishes. He would solicit a renewal of their affection, would ascribe his late unkindness to its just cause,—disappointed attachment ; calmly go into his accounts, and after dispassionately stating that he could not remain in London without ruin to both, propose their retiring for a few years to the Continent.

There are few emotions more productive of happiness to the heart, than those which arise from a wish and determination to return to a state of love and friendliness with those who possess our best affections, who are united to us by the nearest and dearest ties of social life. Evanmore, pleased by these resolutions, and gratified by the dawning tranquillity of his spirits, determined to sit up for his absent wife. "They had parted in anger, but they would meet in love !" Immersed in these thoughts, he was insensible to the flight of time, till a chilly sensation pervading his frame, he looked at his decaying fire, and saw its last embers were fast expiring. "Rosalind is long," thought he, trying to reanimate the expiring flame. But hour after hour elapsed, still Rosalind came not. Evanmore began to feel uneasy, and awaited in breathless expectation her arrival. But no sounds broke upon his listening ear, excepting those which now and then proceeded from a straggling coach as it rumbled over the deserted streets, or at stated intervals the hoarse cry of the watch.

The bustle of business, the sounds of revelry, the clamour of life, the noise of the distant multitude gradually died away, and

morning gleamed into the apartment where sat the weary Evanmore, in solitary, comfortless grandeur. "Where can she be gone?" was the question he often murmured; but no one was near to answer it. With that attention to the happiness of all within his limited sphere which ever distinguished him, he had long since dismissed his domestics to repose; and restless, impatient, and half alarmed, he sought among her cards to learn where she was spending the night. They were thrown indiscriminately into a superb silver filigree basket, and nearly half an hour was spent ere Evanmore drew from amid the countless multitude an invitation for that evening to a private ball at Lady Clarinda Lovelace's. He tossed it back into the basket, and the ardour of his reviving attachment insensibly cooled by the information, that it was at the house of Lord Edgermond's cousin she was spending those hours he had passed in silent gloom, or fond anticipation of happier days; relinquished his intention of waiting for her, and throwing himself on his bed, soon fell into a sleep, rendered long and profound by previous exhaustion. When he unclosed his eyes, he found he was alone; but Rosalind had lately, when she came from any party, of which he had not been her companion, occupied a room adjoining, and he felt no uneasiness. It was noon, and hastily dressing himself, he sought, as usual, the apartment of his child, ere he descended into the breakfast-parlour. She was playing on the floor, but hearing his well-known step, ran to meet him.

"My darling!" he cried, fondly catching her in his arms. And as he glanced, with a father's pride, over her Hebe countenance, he thought of the mother with renovated tenderness.

"When did Mrs. Evanmore come home?" said he to the nurse, who stood with her back turned towards him. The woman did not speak. He repeated the question; and in a voice choked by agitation, she murmured something, signifying that she was not yet returned. Evanmore felt a cold rush at his heart, he pressed his child tighter to it; then ashamed of the dark suspicion that floated over his mind, tried to recall the receding blood by supposing she had remained to breakfast. Fearful of exposing his anxiety, he left the room, and rang for the urn. It was brought in by the servant who usually waited for his mistress, and had accompanied her to Lady Clarinda's the preceding evening.

"When are you to fetch your mistress?" said he, with seeming carelessness. The man looked confused, and hesitated as he said, "he had received no orders." "When did you return?" asked Evanmore, with a growing alarm he vainly tried to repress or conceal.

"About four o'clock, sir. Lord Edgermond told me, as my lady would sleep at Lady Clarinda Lovelace's, she did not require the carriage to wait any longer."

"Lord Edgermond!" muttered Evanmore, in a suffocated

voice; and turning to the table he strove to master the strong overwhelming feelings of doubt and dread that oppressed his recoiling senses. Rosalind had never slept at Lady Clarinda's before. Springing from the table, he resolved to seek her. His heart palpitating violently, he reached Lady Clarinda's, and rapped loudly at the door: it was long ere the summons was answered. There was a something in the man's manner as he saw him, that planted a dagger in his bosom; and scarcely knowing what he said, he inquired if Mrs. Evanmore were up.

"She is—I believe, sir—not——"

"Not what!" said Evanmore, with convulsive energy.

"Not here, sir."

"Where? Where?" He instantly passed the man, flew up the stairs, and burst into the first room that met his frenzied sight.

It was the ball-room—the drapery before the windows was only half drawn aside, and the dull light of a winter's morning, thus partially admitted, rendered more dreary and desolate every surrounding object. The festoons of flowers with which the walls had been decorated, half torn from their stations, hung drooping and withered. The floor presented nothing but a dingy mixture of dirty colours, and imperfect forms. The fires at either end were burnt out, and a high wind roared down the naked chimneys. A few tapers, still dimly glaring in their sockets, threw a funereal light on these monuments of faded pleasure; and he took a rapid and involuntary survey of the dreary scene, while a servant went to inform Lady Clarinda that he must speak with her instantly. Evanmore felt his heart die within him. The man soon returned, to say Lady Clarinda was not up; but that as she understood he had inquired for Mrs. Evanmore, she begged to say, she altered her original intention after his servants returned home; and had left her house in Lord Edgermond's carriage, to sleep with her sister at Lady Wyedale's.

The improbability of this tale flashed on Evanmore's sickening soul; but still it was not impossible, and he flew to Lady Wyedale's to ascertain its veracity. The rest has been told; but the feelings of a husband on sustaining such a blow, no pen can portray, no heart conceive, but that which has thus drank the bitterest cup of affliction to its very dregs.

CHAP. XVI.

"Elate with hope, the young enthusiast came,
 Her bosom fluttering at a sister's name.
 Years had elapsed since last she saw that face
 By beauty gifted with each dazzling grace ;
 But fond affection fanned the sacred flame,
 And bled her glory in her Rosa's fame.
 The varied charms that glid that blissful hour
 When the gay spirit owns no adverse power —
 The hopes that dawn upon the youthful breast —
 The confidence that lulls each little fear to rest —
 The heart that pictures all things fair and bright,
 And bids it heave with insecure delight,
 Were shared by her — and in her arms she caught
 The lovely being who filled each tender thought.
 To every scene of worldly falsehood new,
 Her artless views of life from self she drew ;
 And idly thought in Rosa's breast to find
 The person equalled by the virtuous mind.
 Too soon, alas ! the dear delusion fled,
 And Rosa wrung the bitter tears she shed.
 The angel sister, loved so long — so true —
 Faded in sickening colours from her view.
 The beauteous form remained — the only trace
 Of all that once was innocence and grace !"

It was long before Felicia could believe the reality of what had passed. It appeared to her as a frightful, awful illusion of her fancy — a dream of shapeless images of misery. Could it be, that Rosalind, after having sacrificed so much to obtain the hand of her husband, had fled from him to the arms of a profligate seducer ? Oh, could it be, that the sister of her affections, — she in whom all the romantic associations of her youth had centred, — she whose image no unkindness, no imprudence, no absence, could obliterate, was indeed become that guilty abject thing, from whom even the dearest and nearest relative must shrink back, and consign to oblivion !

Lady Wyedale's grief found vent in the ravings of despair. This termination of Rosalind's unguarded career she had never anticipated, and she knew, as her aunt, and the guardian and guide of her youth, some portion of its disgrace rested on her. But a proud, callous heart is seldom made humble by adversity ; and while she felt that Rosalind's deviation from honour reflected shame on her, she would not trace the reason of what she admitted — would not see that her ill-fated niece was the victim of a wretched education, rather than of her own evil propensities. No compassion for the misguided creature, who had thus idly fancied she should find happiness in guilt and disgrace, mingled with her reflections ; and the only satisfaction she seemed to feel, was found in loading her with reproaches. She enumerated all the plans she had put in practice to ensure a different result — the pains bestowed on every branch of her education, sacred and profane. The resident French governess — the money expended on private lessons from opera dancers,

and singers, and musicians. How she had forced her to get off her church catechism. How she had sent her to be confirmed by the bishop when she was old enough. What trouble she had to make her take the sacrament, though the bishop said it was a thing always proper to be done afterwards. How they quarrelled all the way in the carriage going to church for the purpose, because her untoward temper impelled her to dispute the propriety of every thing she was bid to do, pretending, forsooth! she didn't comprehend what she was engaged in—though she had been presented with "The Whole Duty of Man," handsomely bound, the week before.

Felicia's emotions were of a very different complexion. She felt her sister's dereliction from virtue with the acutest sensations of shame and regret. She considered it not merely as one that must affect her own fair unblemished name with the stain of dishonour; but as a crime involving in its magnitude the most direful and extensive misery. Yet pity was the prominent feeling. Her affection for Rosalind had begun with her being, had flourished in defiance of those storms with which it had been so frequently assailed: she could not tear her from her heart; and even now, memory lingered over the loved remembrance of their childhood. She recalled the brilliant promise of her opening day, and wept to think so fair a flower had not been nursed to maturity by the hand of a judicious guide. Still she felt it was rather afflictive than surprising. She had not, indeed, contemplated this dark close of Rosalind's want of fixed principle; but she had seen that the heavy clouds so long congregating could be dispersed only by a storm, and her reason acknowledged that it was not so extraordinary as terrible.

"Alas!" she thought, "when the heart once leaves its proper residence, when it flies from its home to the society of the world, how frequently does ruin as well as misery pursue the thoughtless fugitive!"

The paroxysms of Lady Wyedale's fury, and Felicia's anguish, were slowly beginning to subside into grief, deep and heartfelt, when a servant announced Mrs. Hustleton. As yet they had received no visitors; for though Rosalind's flippant wit had made her many enemies who rejoiced in her fate, the feelings of her sister and aunt were, to a certain degree, regarded with compassion; and calls of kind inquiry, or notes of apparent sympathy, had hitherto only met their eyes.

As she advanced into the room, Felicia, rendered suspicious by former acts of insolent impertinence, and a thorough knowledge of her character, eyed her with a look of keen investigation, and felt her colour rise, and her heart throb, as she marked the suppressed curiosity, and blended emotions of malice and exultation that strove for mastery in her countenance.

"Dear Lady Wyedale," said she, taking her ladyship's hand, "this is so kind, so friendly, I almost feared I should not have

been admitted, and you know not how I have thought of you and your sweet niece, dear Miss Leycester."

Now, Lady Wyedale's "sweet niece, dear Miss Leycester," was of all others the object of her unqualified aversion. To the airy impertinence of Rosalind she could sometimes offer a decent retort; and though it chafed her irascible temper, it did nothing more. But there was in Felicia a something that inspired her with alarm. In her cool, penetrating glance, and civil yet pointed distance, a something that seemed to say she was *known*—that the little crooked policy of her heart lay exposed to her contempt; and while her proud haughty spirit was exasperated to almost madness by this idea, she dared not give utterance to the malice that rankled at her heart, or would admit, even to herself, that terror prompted those obsequious attentions—that servile adulation with which she sought to avert her dislike.

"Dear Miss Leycester," she continued, turning to Felicia, "always employed! Oh, what a treasure you must be to your good aunt!"

The emphasis on *you*, and the sidling, cringing, fawning manner, as with an air of extreme interest she looked first at her and then at Lady Wyedale, prepared Felicia for the attack meditated; and scarcely breathing, she listened to her inquiries after Lady Wyedale's health, in tones that announced she expected to hear she was extremely indisposed. "I am so glad to hear you are pretty well; for, indeed I was afraid, my dear, dear Lady Wyedale, this terrible blow would have been too much for you and your amiable niece."

A cloud overspread her ladyship's brow; but it was instantly dispelled by the well-timed flattery of her insidious visitor.

"I am sure," she pursued in a whining voice, "your ladyship knows me too well to suppose for a moment I would have alluded to the late unhappy event in your family, but from a desire to offer you and dear Miss Leycester every consolation in my power—your ladyship in particular—whose attachment and maternal kindness to poor misguided Mrs. Evanmore must render such a circumstance particularly afflictive. Indeed, your ladyship does not imagine how all your friends sympathise with you. I assure you I have felt more for you than I can describe; for certainly your ladyship has not experienced the return you ought for such unparalleled goodness; but do not, I entreat you, permit this dreadful calamity to weigh on your spirits. Hope, my dear madam, for the best; and though it must be additionally painful to you, that what has occurred should become the subject of that legal investigation, which I presume will——"

"I know not," interrupted Lady Wyedale, in a frenzy of passion, induced by the words legal investigation. "I have never condescended to hold any intercourse with him, since his stolen marriage. I then disclaimed both for ever."

"But no doubt such will be the result of what has passed," said she, with a look of anxious solicitude at Felicia.

Indignant at this mean and unfeeling attempt to satisfy her curiosity, Felicia kept her eyes firmly fixed on her work, and appeared unconscious the question was addressed to her.

"And poor Mr. Evanmore! you know, at such a time one can't help feeling for him, however blameable his conduct. I hear he supports himself with as much fortitude as can be expected, and that the parties are gone to the Continent; but you are of course better acquainted with these points than the world, because the poor misguided fugitive no doubt left a letter or something to extenuate this imprudent, unfortunate step."

"No, indeed," replied Lady Wyedale; "she is too abandoned to deem extenuation necessary."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Mrs. Hustleton, shaking her head. "Then your ladyship does not know where they are gone to. She has never written to you?"

"These are questions, madam," said Felicia, "which I had hoped we should have been spared. It can be of no importance to the world to know the particulars of so sad a private history."

"Oh no, my dear Miss Leycester, certainly not the world, but your friends, the old friends of poor dear Lady Wyedale, must always take an interest in what so nearly concerns her. Feeling for her as I do, and knowing as I do how much the thing is talked of, and how much Mrs. Evanmore is reflected upon, I own, out of my regard for my dear friend Lady Wyedale, I should have been glad to have had it in my power to say she had something to allege in excuse for her flight, and that she had so far considered the feelings of her family as to inform them where she was, and confirm their hopes that Lord Edgermond would act honourably towards her when Mr. Evanmore had obtained the divorce which —"

"Oh, ma'am," interrupted Felicia, somewhat bitterly, "a married woman can never have anything to plead in extenuation of breaking every law, human and divine; nor we anything to hope from the honour of a man who has trampled on the rights of hospitality, violated the most sacred bonds of society, and evinced himself utterly destitute of every virtuous principle. Under these calamitous circumstances, I think it some atonement of her crime, that she has not attempted to shift the burthen of her iniquity on her injured husband—some proof of her self-abasement, that she seeks to hide her disgrace from every former friend and acquaintance."

"Well, dear Miss Leycester, I am glad you see Mrs. Evanmore's conduct in so favourable a point of view. I assure you, it was a desire to throw a more agreeable colouring over her elopement, that induced me to make these inquiries. I should have been happy to say to all my friends that —"

"Madam," interrupted Felicia, calmly, but pointedly, "those

who feel for our grief, and lament my sister's errors, will best evince their sincerity by forbearing to touch on such a topic, by consigning her faults and her remembrance alike to oblivion."

Nothing is more exasperating to an artful mind than its perceiving not only that its motives have been exposed, but its designs defeated by the superior address of another. Mrs. Hustleton saw her meanness and hypocrisy were alike visible to Felicia's penetration, and her own secret cunning overmatched by her open candour.

Baffled and incensed by this indirect, yet cutting reproof, she gave her a look of suppressed rage and malevolence, and then turning to Lady Wyedale with a smiling face, as she bowed in assent, said, "At Miss Leycester's request, I will change this unfortunate subject to one more agreeable. I am sure you will rejoice to hear Mr. Osborne is the accepted lover of Miss Louisa Dursley."

No congratulations met her ear, for Lady Wyedale was not quite sure whether she had not taken a liberty with her, and Felicia did not wish to appear otherwise than as she felt, deeply wounded by her indelicate allusion to Rosalind's disgrace, and the half-suppressed malice that she could not help thinking lurked under her misplaced sympathy.

But no way dismayed she pursued: "The Dursleys are such a charming family, 'tis impossible not to be delighted with such a connection. Frank might have aspired to more fortune, for she will only have five thousand pounds, but fortune was *never* any object with him. Indeed, I think it's never of the least importance, when put in competition with the more solid and durable charms of the mind and goodness, all of which the bride elect possesses in a high degree. Indeed, the whole family are, without exception, the most superior persons I ever met with; so clever, so charitable, so properly pious; for after all that has been said of their bigotry, I assure you, no people can enjoy life more. Everything about them in the most complete style of elegance—their house, furniture, table, dress,—nothing spared I assure you, my lady, and yet all conducted with the utmost economy and prudence; without which, your ladyship well knows, there can be no chance of lasting happiness or respectability. My sweet young friend here, I believe, can vouch for me that this is not an exaggerated picture of this charming family; for, if I am not mistaken, she spent some months with them the last year?"

"A fortnight," replied Felicia, coldly.

Mrs. Hustleton waited for some minutes to receive Felicia's corroborative testimonial to the truth of her panegyric on the "charming family." But nothing greeted her ear. Profound, melancholy silence on the part of aunt and niece at length convinced her it would be profitless to push her investigation further; so she rose from her seat, bade them good morning

with smothered indignation, and hastened from the house to communicate to her *coterie* that, "poor Lady Wyedale might perhaps be pitied, she did seem to feel Mrs. Evanmore's infamy; but as for Miss Leycester she almost openly vindicated her sister's depravity, or at least would not suffer a word to be said against it. This might no doubt be traced to her concealed resentment against Mr. Evanmore for deserting her as soon as he saw the pretty sister. But still it was very astonishing, and rather sad in one who made such a pretence to ultra religion. After all she really thought (she was sorry to say it) Mrs. Evanmore was the best of the two; at least she was the most open; and she had such a hatred of hypocrisy, that she must say ingenuousness covered a great many faults in her eyes. Daily she thanked Heaven that things had turned out as they had. She would not have had Mr. Osborne marry into such a family for millions. Miss Dursley had no titled relations to boast of, but, thank Heaven! she was one of an honourable race, however. No adulteresses, no spendthrifts in their family. For her part, she was amazed, when men married, they did not oftener think of the lady's connections. But young men would be young men to the end of the chapter; and if a face pleased them, they regarded nothing else: it was, therefore, the more gratifying to their parents and friends when they did make a proper selection—when all these advantages were united in one person."

In these sapient remarks all Lady Wyedale's acquaintance cordially united; and before the elopement of Mrs. Evanmore ceased to excite any further interest,—gave way, in short, to newer topics of scandal,—a stranger would have been puzzled to decide which of the family group was, on this lamentable occasion, deemed the most deserving of obloquy—Lady Wyedale—Felicia—Evanmore—Lord Edgermond—or Rosalind—so unwilling did they feel to leave any member without his or her proportionate share of blame.

CHAP. XVII.

"One fatal remembrance—one sorrow that throws
Its bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes—
To which life nothing darker or brighter can bring,
For which joy has no balm—and affliction no sting." MOORE.

EVANMORE'S first impulse was to pursue the fugitives to the Continent, whither he soon learnt they were fled; and after writing a hasty note to Felicia, entreating her to call from time to time in Baker Street to see that his deserted infant was properly treated by his domestics, he commenced his wretched pur-

suit. He travelled without allowing himself more than a few hours for rest and refreshment, till he reached Paris : there, after great difficulty, he traced them to retired lodgings in the suburbs of the city ; and with frightful agitation made his way to the rooms he supposed they occupied. They were empty ; and in answer to his vehement inquiries, he was told they had removed the evening before. His informant could give him no further intelligence ; and here he lost all clue to their retreat. They travelled under the assumed names of Captain and Mrs. Montrassor, and took so many precautions to prevent detection, that he saw it was futile to persist in his intention of seeking them. Fatigued and broken-hearted he returned to town, and abandoned himself to the despair that almost threatened to overwhelm both his health and reason.

When roused from the first torpor of grief, he instituted proceedings in Doctors' Commons, and his next steps were, to dismiss a part of his establishment, sell his carriages and horses ; and, as soon as he could find an eligible tenant for his house, to retire into lodgings with his child. On examining his long neglected affairs, he discovered, as is generally the case after making such investigations, that he was much more deeply involved than he had surmised, and that years of rigid persevering economy would scarcely enable him to liquidate the many debts thus wantonly contracted, and to appropriate something for the support of his child when she would be deprived of his protection. This was a subject too painful to pursue. Evanmore saw the folly of which he had been guilty, in not looking forward to the certain termination of the boundless expenses to which he had tacitly consented ; but still he had not energy or strength of mind sufficient to profit by the bitter lesson he had received. He was determined to sue for a divorce from his guilty, ungrateful wife, and equally resolved to wipe away a part of his dishonour by challenging her betrayer the instant he revisited his native country. The consequences of this step he would not contemplate. Sometimes a sudden remembrance that if he should fall, his Rosa would be a destitute orphan—should he survive, it might be with hands embrued in the blood of a fellow-creature, shot a pang through his heart, acute as that which is inflicted by the hand of an assassin, and he would strike his forehead in a paroxysm of agony ; but his purpose was never shaken. The crime of duelling, considered abstractedly, he abhorred. He knew it was in express contradiction to the laws of God and man, though varnished over by custom, and supported by the flimsy arguments of false honour ; but early habits, early impressions, made him incapable of stemming what he conceived was the general opinion of fashionable people. And, as the deaf adder which refused to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely, Evanmore smothered his scruples as they arose, and refused to listen to the small still voice within him, which

whispered, that the tarnished honour of his wife could not be wiped out by the blood of her seducer—that the anguish he now felt would be little allayed by rushing unbidden into the presence of his offended Maker; or by sending thither, covered with crimes, the foul destroyer of his peace.

While such were the occupations and reflections of the more than widowed Evanmore, time flew on; but no event of the least importance chequered the monotonous existence of Lady Wyedale and her dejected relative. Felicia, indeed, recovered from the shock her feelings had sustained, and resumed her former pursuits with accustomed energy, but her spirits seemed gone. Lady Wyedale, still more anxious she should form some connection whose brilliancy might cast this spot on the house of Leycester into the shade, became hourly solicitous that she should mix more with society, and enter more into the amusements of the world. She would not, could not, see, that dissipation had been the rock on which Rosalind's fair bark had split. But Felicia had never felt any real happiness in such scenes, and now loathed them as the *ignes fatui*, the wandering lights, whose bright, but delusive beams, united to a wretched education, had led her misguided Rosalind into darkness and misery. She experienced no cessation of her cares but in unceasing employment—no pleasure, but that sickly gleam which the knowledge of Evanmore's struggles to render himself independent gave her. Yes, she had another and a purer, a more refined source of consolation. She let not selfish grief so absorb her mind as to forget the claims of the afflicted; and in ministering to those yet more wretched than herself, she found a sweet and sure alleviation of her own sorrows. Still the hand of adversity pressed heavily on her; and when the period approached which was to give to the world the minute particulars of Rosalind's deviation from virtue, she felt every feeling sharpened to such poignant anguish, that she entreated Lady Wyedale would remove from town, and quit for a while the scene and the theatre of their mutual shame.

At first Lady Wyedale resented this petition as an unpardonable liberty, and a perfectly unnecessary step; but, after some reflection, and narrowly watching the solemn countenances of her acquaintance as it drew near, she began to think it would be rather awkward to be in London while the trial was pending. But to own that she had been overcome, had yielded to the judicious suggestion of another, was a degradation to which she would not have submitted for the universe: after some reflection, she resolved to proceed to the Lodge without a moment's delay, and allege indispensable business as her excuse. She had a few weeks before been informed that her steward was in a declining state of health, and solicited to appoint a successor in case of his decease. She had not previously intended to do more than invest his nephew in his honours, by letter, when the event should happen; but she now seized on this circumstance as a plea for

her journey, and two days afterwards Felicia and herself set off for the Lodge.

To Felicia this unexpected arrangement was one, of all others, the best calculated to cheer her at this period of sorrow. She had recently received letters replete with kindness from both Mrs. and Miss Berkely, indirectly sympathising with her on the heavy affliction she was labouring under. She knew their opinion of her would not be lowered by this misconduct of her sister; and as these and a thousand other pleasing reflections presented themselves to her imagination, her spirits revived so much, that again a long dormant suspicion that she secretly liked Mr. Berkely soured Lady Wyedale's temper beyond its customary acidity. Her attentions were daily becoming more necessary to her: she had lately begun to think that if she really would not marry, she might preserve the consequence of the Leycesters by living single; and once or twice, too, she had thought, that if the thing could be brought about, she should not be sorry, at least not oppose the affection, which she felt convinced James Leycester entertained for her.

James Leycester was one of those quiet, even-tempered, un-presuming men peculiarly calculated to *slide* into a fortune. He had seen, and still continued to see, that Lady Wyedale did not intend to make him her heir without betraying the smallest apparent displeasure. His thoughts on the subject were best known to himself, and, he felt, best kept so. That warmth and impetuosity which a generous mind so often evinces under unjust treatment, he had too much policy to manifest; for he had already learnt enough in life's hard school to know, that injuries complained of seldom produce anything but augmented unkindness, nor are unfrequently attended by more serious consequences; for, anxious to justify what has given offence both to conscience and the world, a harsh relation is often converted into a bitter enemy, whose eager desire to vindicate self, injures us in the estimation of those who were originally inclined to view us with regard. Mr. Leycester was not insensible to his claims as her heir-at-law, only nephew, too, on the male line, or forgetful of the cruel struggles which she had inhumanly left his father to make with a large family, while she was rolling in wealth. But such reminiscences, he rightly judged, were best consigned to the recesses of his own breast. He was now in full chase of something—and as the least betrayal of his feelings he knew would ensure him nothing, he smiled and smiled, and bowed and bowed, with the same politeness he would have used had he viewed his lady aunt with kindlier sentiments. He took care not to neglect his business in the pursuit; and as civility costs very little, he felt that, if disappointed at last, he should have sustained no loss. Her friendship was a present honour, her countenance might be a future advantage; and should Felicia displease her, which he had sagacity enough to

foresee was by no means improbable, the estates of Sir Thomas Wyedale would, in all human probability, become his. Influenced by these prudent considerations, he resolved to bury the long-cherished resentment of his family in his own heart, and patiently persevere. When first we embark in any interesting pursuit, we seldom propose following it with improper eagerness, or employing undue means to accomplish our end. But as "the chariot-wheel becomes warm by its own motion," we cannot be too scrupulous in daily examining whether we exceed not our original intention—whether we do not grow so anxious to achieve our wishes, as to seek their attainments by less virtuous paths than those we first prescribed to ourselves. Mr. Leycester was no sensitive plant, shrinking from the fear of doing wrong—the apprehension of injuring others; but when he first came to town he simply intended not to defeat his own views by idle petulance or useless resentment. He thought he had the best right to Lady Wyedale's fortune, but he did not propose to oust his fair competitors by any underhand measures. As, however, he became more alive to the charms of wealth and power he grew less fastidious. To coax and cajole the old woman he soon learnt to think perfectly justifiable, and his desire to fall in with her sentiments, united to a strong secret personal dislike to Rosalind, whose satiric wit had made him her decided enemy, induced him to think there was nothing wrong in relating every little anecdote he could gather to her disadvantage. She was his most formidable opponent; and after persuading himself she had justly forfeited Lady Wyedale's favour by her disobedience and ingratitude, he laboured hard to widen the breach between them—much harder, indeed, than was at all requisite, for Rosalind had an implacable foe in her ladyship's own heart that rendered the exertions of any other quite unnecessary. The manœuvres he directed against his other competitor were conducted with more ability, and he had some internal fears, less honour. It was his original intention to endeavour to win her affections, and thus make security doubly secure; but shrewd and penetrating, he soon saw that he had an unacknowledged rival in Mr. Berkely; and, though perhaps unknown to himself, that Felicia's feelings towards him were of such a nature as to render every attempt to gain her heart abortive. He therefore changed his plan of operation; and by affording Mr. Berkely every opportunity of pressing his advantage, hoped Felicia would become so much attached to him as to brave Lady Wyedale's evident dislike to the idea of her marrying him. He delivered her message, previous to her journey to Weymouth, with a smile and a manner that swelled Mr. Berkely's bosom with delight; but though he inferred from it that Mr. Leycester suspected his cousin was far from indifferent to him, still, with the timidity of a modest man and a lover, he did not feel quite assured she yet entertained so strong a regard for him as to

except his hand in opposition to the will of her aunt, in whom he perceived he had a determined and inveterate enemy. He consequently forbore to follow her to Weymouth; but while he preserved that caution which his mother had recommended, he omitted no opportunity of keeping alive that favourable impression which he hoped she had conceived of himself and family. He wrote to thank her for her kind remembrances conveyed to him by her cousin Mr. Leycester, expressed his unfeigned regret at the suddenness of their separation, and his hopes that in the bustling lively scene to which she was going, she would sometimes think of her friends at the Grove.

Felicia blushed when she received the letter, and once an indirect suspicion that he loved her floated like a bright vision before her eyes. But it was transient as bright. "She should be sorry if he regarded her with stronger feelings than those she cherished for him. She esteemed him the most amiable man in the world, but she could never love again. It would be treating him ill to receive his attentions, when she did not mean to encourage his addresses; wrong to accept his hand, when her heart could never accompany the gift." In pursuance of these reflections, she simply replied to his letter in the postscript of one addressed to his mother. But Mr. Berkely was not so much discouraged by it as she imagined he would be. Her manner, her looks, her tones, when she spoke to him during his last visit, united to Mr. Leycester's while delivering her farewell message, all conspired to make him feel assured she did not see him with entire indifference; and regarding her postscript as emanating from that womanly delicacy which refuses to be won unsought, he was contriving another visit to town, which he hoped would terminate with the completion of his wishes, when he was shocked by seeing in the papers of the day that Rosalind had eloped with Lord Edgermond. To him the information was productive of scarcely less regret than to Felicia.

He had, as she often hinted, once seen her with sentiments bordering on attachment; but, ere the flame which her consummate loveliness had kindled burnt with brightness or warmth, it had been extinguished by that knowledge of her character which the close intimacy he was seeking necessarily gave him; and, with one sigh, he had dismissed her from his breast for ever, just before Felicia left Leominster. Mr. Berkely was no stoic, insensible to the multiplied charms of blooming youth, the scintillations of wit, the dazzling power of beauty; but his just and well-poised mind rendered only unto Cæsar what was Cæsar's due. He knew such possessions, however fascinating, could not give to the many-coloured scenes of life a pleasing tint; could not disarm disappointment of its sting; could not rob the grave of its victory: and he turned from the glittering Rosalind with blended feelings of pity, sorrow, and disappointment.

As Felicia imagined, the misconduct of her sister had not

thrown a shade on her. She reigned bright in his estimation as before : he knew they had not imbibed the same ideas, the same lessons, the same principles ; but he deeply regretted that she should be the sister of an adulteress ; and he knew her ardent attachment to this lovely though frail being would render the blow doubly afflictive to her pure bosom. He felt also very anxious to learn what would be her behaviour under this calamitous event — whether she would continue to notice her — whether she would visit Mr. Evanmore during her absence. Mr. Berkely, in short, was a man and a lover ; and not so much of the latter as to be ignorant that the object of his admiration was — a woman erring like all the rest of her fellow-creatures, and once devotedly attached to the unhappy Evanmore. He knew that pity is a great friend to love ; and while he could have pledged his life on Felicia's purity of mind, he was not without uneasy fears that this strange stroke of misfortune might not contribute to strengthen former feelings in Evanmore's favour, revive the recollection of his virtues, and awaken a sentiment of regret for his solitary state, which might render her more averse to pledging her vows to another.

CHAP. XVIII.

" Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
His works. Admitted once to his embrace,
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :
Thine eye shall be instructed ; and thine heart,
Made pure, shall relish, with divine delight
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought." COWPER.

THE Lodge was about three miles from Elm Grove, and its stately plantations met those of Mr. Berkely. When the carriage reached the little eminence where she had stopped on leaving the Grove, Felicia eagerly leaned out of the window, and caught another lingering look at objects so dear to her.

A blooming spring had embellished its charms, and never did the residence of her friends appear so full of beauties. The trees had put on their loveliest dress — the blushing bosom of the daisy mingled with the yellow flowers of the gold-cup, and the short green grassy velvet of the verdant meads. The hedges were white with the fragrant blossoms of the hawthorn. Here and there the dark purple of the violet peeped from amid the pale green leaves of the strawberry just bursting from the earth, or contrasted its regal tints with the soft hues of the starry primrose. The air was perfumed with the sweet scent of the lilac and apple-blossom, whose deep red and white flowers gave a rich and lively colour to the scene. The path through which they travelled bounded a part of the domain, and was shaded by detached groups of trees, the luxuriant growth of ages, interspersed with

the silver birch, acacia, and laburnum, whose feathery branches trembled in the breeze.

But these were not the only objects of Felicia's admiration. Sometimes she obtained a glimpse of the village beyond — its little stream gushing and bubbling over its pebbly bed, or pouring its clear waters amid the fertile meads, over whose green lawns the shadows of the oak and elm threw a softened beauty — its thatched roofs, gay with moss and dotted with tufts of stonecrop — its latticed windows peeping through the light foliage of the honeysuckle or jessamine, and flashing bright in the morning sun — its blue smoke curling against the thicket — its smiling gardens — its little inhabitants sporting before its lowly doors, their infantine merriment mingling with the loud bark of the protecting dog and the shrill crowing of the stately cock — possessed even more charms for her.

The Lodge was a large handsome brick building, replete with every convenience that luxury or fashion could require; but it wanted that something for which foreigners have no word, but which is so well known to the English by the simple term, comfort.

Felicia rose early the ensuing morning; and, after taking a ramble in the adjacent grounds, felt herself become more pleased with her new residence. Perhaps, a portion of her regard might spring from discovering that she could obtain a bird's-eye view of the Grove from an elevated part of the plantations. She longed to see and embrace its dear inhabitants; and, when two or three days had elapsed without receiving the call she had expected, almost began to think them tardy in paying their compliments to Lady Wyedale, negligent of herself. Every rap at the door startled her, and every distant noise was converted by fancy into the rumbling of a carriage, or the sound of a horse's foot.

"I wonder the Berkelys are so long in waiting upon you!" said she, one day to Lady Wyedale. "I fear they are indisposed."

"Long!" repeated Lady Wyedale, "I never thought of them till you mentioned their names; and I am sure I hope I shall not be bored by a visit very soon. At all events, I shall be safe till I have been to church, if they understand propriety."

This reply relieved Felicia from those indistinct feelings of apprehension which she was beginning to entertain, that illness or some other cause might have contributed to prevent the Berkelys from paying them a visit. She knew they were by no means on a very friendly footing with Lady Wyedale; and as the ensuing day was Sunday, she anticipated seeing them with renewed pleasure. The morning, however, proved very rainy. Lady Wyedale did not choose to brave the cold; and the inclemency of the weather was indirectly alleged as a reason for not ordering the carriage for Felicia's use. Felicia saw the real motive; but she neither felt extremely mortified nor extremely angry. She always regretted when she could not attend divine

service twice a day, and when within a short distance never permitted the weather to prevent her from thus testifying her willing obedience to the law of her Creator; but she could always spend a wet Sunday piously at home: she therefore expressed no uneasiness at this arrangement; and, after a day which was only too short for its many interesting employments, she closed her eyes in innocence and peace.

A tempestuous night was succeeded by a morn of such clear unruffled beauty, that as she looked out of her window she could not help wishing it was in her power to walk to Elm Grove. She was not obliged to be ceremonious, ought not, indeed, to stand on the punctilio of a visit with Mrs. Berkely; and, after some little mental struggles between her unwillingness to ask what might displease Lady Wyedale, and her wish to see the Berkelys, she descended to the breakfast parlour, resolved to wait patiently till she could visit them without provoking her ready wrath. Her ladyship was not there, and, she learnt from her maid, would not rise till dinner, having a slight cold. The temptation was too strong to be resisted; and after begging a few minutes' audience with her aunt, she stated her obligations to the family, and her desire to be allowed to visit them that morning. Her request was so reasonable, and urged with so much respectful solicitude, it was at length sullenly granted. Her wish to walk to the Grove, was, however, refused; and with a view to convince Mr. Berkely of his presumption, her ladyship ordered that she should be driven in the new carriage she had just purchased, escorted by two footmen. Felicia loathed this parade, and felt that the Berkelys would have deemed her more a friend had she walked under the convoy of her ladyship's favourite spaniel; but she could not resist what seemed so purely the effect of kindness; and, thus attended, she set off to the Grove.

When the carriage stopped, a servant informed her the family were all out, but dispersed about the grounds; and, till he could summon them, she alighted and walked into the drawing-room. It was just as they had left it. Mrs. Berkely's knitting hung suspended in a bag of no fashionable dimensions from the back of her arm-chair; the table was covered with a variety of little caps and frocks, which the Miss Berkelys were manufacturing for the use of their poor neighbours; and near them lay an open volume, with Mr. Berkely's pencil between the leaves: a long paragraph appeared strongly marked. There was nothing treacherous or improper in her looking at a work thus exposed to the eyes of servants; and, unable to resist the curiosity she felt to learn the subject of his reflections, she hastily walked to the table. The author had touched on the subject of female education; and the following lines were those Mr. Berkely had inclosed with brackets:—

“Reforms, however, in religion, can never be needless, whether for men or women. Let the latter then, since their improvement

is in question, more seriously consider its inexpressible importance, and live more entirely under the influence of its precepts. Let them deeply and practically be persuaded, that the favour of God is far above every earthly blessing; that one act of charity or self-denial, one real exercise of humility or devotion, is better worth than the most flattering display of wit and accomplishments, with all the brilliancy of beauty to lend them lustre. So shall the loveliness of woman be twice lovely: so shall the evening as well as the morn of life shine with unclouded brightness: and He, 'before whose face the heavens and earth shall flee away,' smile on them in that awful hour, when the charms of the fair, and the wisdom of the wise, shall alike be vain, and holiness alone retain its value."

Felicia perused these remarks with a sensation she could not describe. Rosalind, rich in every thing but virtue, swam before her eyes, and she doubted not, when he marked these observations, that Mr. Berkely had been equally struck by a passage which so forcibly delineated the inefficacy of beauty or talents to confer honour or happiness on their gifted possessor. She was still standing near the table, absorbed in thought, when Mr. Berkely suddenly entered. Her hand yet rested on the volume, and her eye yet glanced on the page when he appeared. Their eyes met—hers were suffused in tears; and, conscious of the cause of her emotion, Mr. Berkely was unable to articulate the welcome he wished to offer. Mrs. Berkely interrupted this painful interview. Her face bespoke her real sympathy, and soothed, yet affected, by her silent commiseration, Felicia turned to a window, and wept aloud. Mr. Berkely left the room—her distress he could not endure to witness; and, relieved by his absence, Felicia soon recovered from her agitation. Mrs. Berkely did not make the most distant allusion to her sister, for she felt this was a sorrow that admits of no consolation. She spoke only on general topics, and intimated her hopes that Felicia would be a frequent guest at the Grove during her residence in the country. Felicia could not promise that she would; but she expressed so sincere a desire to be their visitor, that, as he handed her into the carriage, Mr. Berkely ventured, for the first time, to hint his hopes, that she would permit him to wait upon her at the Lodge. Felicia readily gave her assent; but, hurried by the remembrance of their singular meeting, she did not attach to this petition any thing of a serious nature till she reached home, and, in the privacy of her apartment, was scrupulously recalling the events of the day. She then became sensible that he had asked, and she granted, what probably meant more than a simple request that he might renew his former calls. She blushed deeply; but the blush was soon displaced by the recollection that she could not return his affection; had, perhaps, unguardedly given him reason to think she should; and, unwilling to inflict a moment's pain on such a heart by refusing his attentions, fearful she had acted im-

properly in encouraging them, she remained agitated and perplexed during many days. Her embarrassments were then relieved by a note from Miss Berkely, announcing that her brother was gone to visit Mr. Andrew Berkely, who was very dangerously ill. A few days removed her anxiety for his life; but he continued so ill, he would not part with his brother. Felicia tried to believe that the regret she felt at this unexpected separation from Mr. Berkely solely proceeded from its distressing cause; and, ere she could analyse the nature of those feelings she wished to ascribe to friendliness, Mr. Evanmore's cause came on, and every other thought was absorbed in the overwhelming interest she took in such a trial. She had now but one fear, that Rosalind might appear to have sought her ruin; but one hope, that, when the tie that bound her to Evanmore was dissolved, she might become the wife of her seducer. For some weeks she was destined to endure all the vicissitudes of these opposite emotions. The trial was then decided—Rosalind's imprudence and Evanmore's supineness were so manifest, that very small damages were given; and as the paper fell out of her hands which contained every disgraceful particular, Felicia felt an additional pang from the apprehension that he, who had taken so little pains to shield his partner in guilt from obloquy, would be little likely to raise her from the station she had justly forfeited to his own elevated rank.

"Sin has many shades," and though no gloss, no palliation can render its aspect fair, there are degrees even in actual vice. Felicia had clung to the hope that Rosalind would not have appeared an easy conquest; and when this solitary consolation was wrested from her, she felt every previous wound aggravated and increased. Covered with shame and grief, she hid herself from all society: even that of the Berkelys seemed unproductive of pleasure. To a certain degree she had fallen—sunk with her sister—and, after three months spent in solitude and sorrow, she returned with her aunt to town, careless where she passed her embittered existence.

Mr. Berkely paid her a visit a few days after her arrival; but it was undistinguished, excepting by a manner so respectful, that it almost amounted to formality. His brother was now a convalescent, and he talked of returning to the Grove in the space of a week.

A few days subsequent he called again to bid her adieu. Lady Wyedale was from home, and they sat nearly half an hour alone. Still Mr. Berkely hinted not the remotest wish that their friendship should change into a dearer intimacy: he seemed, indeed, too much out of spirits for such feelings to have a place in his bosom, and Felicia saw him depart with feelings of sorrow she vainly tried to disguise from herself. While, however, she admitted their existence, she deceived herself as to their origin. That he had once seen her with interest—had once intended to solicit her affections, she felt assured. What then withheld him from declaring himself? It was her sister's disgrace, her sister's

violation of all the sacred bounds of honour and decorum. He did not, indeed, censure her; his dejection evinced how much he pitied her; but he had too nice a sense of delicacy to unite himself to a woman thus unhappily situated. Should not Lord Edgermond marry Rosalind, what would be her fate? such a one as no man of his principles could wish to be allied to, however distantly. Yes, it was certainly as she imagined, for when Mr. Berkely hinted at his attachment just previous to his visit to his brother, the extent of Rosalind's disgrace was not exposed. His brother, a grave clergyman, and his sister-in-law, a woman of strict virtue, had endeavoured to persuade him he would derive neither respect nor happiness from such a connection, and he had determined to abandon it. "And he has a just right to do so," pursued Felicia, her eyes filling with tears, "he had not gone too far to withdraw with honour, and indeed it is better, much better that he should not have solicited my hand; I must have declined it. I only lament that my situation is such that he cannot address me." She dashed away the tears that rolled over her face, and determined to think of him no more. Disappointed in her own views of happiness, lowered in the opinion of the world by the depravity of her sister, her spirits gone, her respectability impaired, a single life was the only sphere which she could now fill with any degree of propriety or probability of happiness. She was a solitary, unconnected being, torn from all those she had ever loved, and condemned to journey through life destitute of those endearing ties and charms that brighten its dreary paths. "But Thy will, not mine, be done!" she said, silently folding her hands; and though a tear accompanied this devout acquiescence in the mandate of her Maker, a holy calm overspread her spirits, a pious serenity again resumed that place in her bosom, which had so lately been usurped by grief and despondency.

CHAP. XIX.

"I wander through the night,
When all but me take rest,
And the Moon's soft beams fall piteously
Upon my troubled breast."

JOANNA BAILLIE.

SIX dreary months had the laws of his country separated Evanmore from his faithless wife, when he learnt that Lord Edgermond was arrived in town from Italy. He was alone, and the fate of Rosalind seemed involved in darkness. On one point, however, the fashionable world seemed agreed, that she neither was nor would be his wife.

Evanmore felt his thirst of vengeance increased by this intelligence. His peace, his happiness, his honour had then been sacrificed to gratify an ephemeral passion—the woman he had

been so proud to call his, was not then worthy to share the stilled lustre to which she might have been raised by him for whom she had sacrificed all that rendered her estimable among her fellow-creatures.

Anxious for an early meeting, he waited upon a gentleman with whom he had become intimate since his residence in London, and requested he would be the bearer of a challenge to Lord Edgermond.

Lord Edgermond was so perfectly conversant with the established rules of fashionable life, that he was fully prepared for Evanmore's thus seeking to redress the wrongs he had heaped upon him; and so much a man of honour and feeling, that he would have considered himself disgraced, had he declined the opportunity of shedding the blood of him whose life he had rendered previously miserable. The challenge was instantly accepted; and, after securing the attendance of a military officer of high rank, he dressed himself for a party, where he knew the seduction of the wife, and the murder of the husband, would be regarded as instances of gallantry and bravery, reflecting equal honour on his powers and principles.

Lord Edgermond was from home when Evanmore's friend called at his hotel; and it was not till late in the day that their meeting the ensuing morning at six o'clock, behind Chalk Farm, was finally decided upon.

Evanmore's affairs were still in a very perplexed state, and, anxious to make every arrangement in his power to satisfy the claims of his creditors, he sat up till midnight. All was then adjusted, and he threw himself upon his bed to obtain a few hours' repose: he slept, but his sleep was perturbed; and, unrefreshed, he soon arose. He hastily dressed himself, and went into the library. The fire he had left the preceding evening still glimmered in the grate: he had one letter to write, and it was one of such a character that he knew not how to commence it; while he felt every moment was precious—that he now possessed leisure which might never more be his. His hand rested on his writing-desk—a few hours hence, and it might be nerveless in death. He thought of his infant—there was death in the thought. He seized a pen, and in a few hurried lines prepared his will, together with some general instructions to the guardian of his child. Again he paused; and, wrapped in gloomy meditations, remained transfixed to his chair, his eyes bent in vacancy upon this, perhaps, last memorial of his wishes, when he was roused from this trance of deep and agonising reflection by hearing the watch cry, "Past four o'clock."

"Ha!" he said, starting, "have I so little time to devote to thee?" and, drawing his writing-desk closer to him, he addressed a letter, long and heartrending, to Felicia. He implored her to accept the office of guardian to his child, to become the executrix of his will. He had no friends to whose care he dare entrust

her, none on whose honour he could so implicitly rely. The *father* had now touched on a subject whose interest banished every other; and he continued to write, reckless of all but that he was recommending his child to her protection, till memory suddenly reminded him that he had in his possession a miniature of Felicia. The suddenness of their separation had prevented its return at the time they mutually resigned their engagement; and his secret unwillingness to think they had indeed parted for ever, deterred him from sending it back. After he became the husband of Rosalind, he had once or twice thought he ought not to retain such a pledge of his former attachment to her sister; but the fear of inflicting a deeper wound on her feelings, an unwillingness to speak on such a topic to Rosalind, all conspired to deter him from executing the intention; and it now occurred to him, that it might probably revive feelings in Felicia's bosom, which it would no longer be criminal to indulge when their object was low in the grave—might yet more interest her in behalf of his Rosa, should his approaching duel make her an orphan. He rose from the table as this idea suggested itself to his mind; and in a private drawer of his escritoir sought for this memento of the ardent attachment which had once existed between them. A feeling of uncontrollable anguish swelled his bosom, and, grasping a miniature case half-covered with papers, he resolved once more to contemplate the features of her he had adored—yet deserted—her whose character had hourly risen in his esteem, who was the last friend he possessed on earth, who would extend to his destitute child that protection of which her mother had twice robbed her. He tore it open, and Rosalind, glowing in radiant beauty, met his eyes. She was in her masquerade habit, and the power of her delineator had given to her transcendent features more than mortal loveliness. With frenzied violence he dashed the glittering vision from his hands, and, clasping them in agony together, rushed from the spot where it lay, with the recoiling step of one who fears to tread on a gilded serpent. Unconscious where he went, he found himself near one of the windows. A feverish heat burnt in his throbbing temples, and he opened the window that he might catch the reviving breath of dawn.

It was yet scarcely light; not a star illumined the dark vault of heaven, and a piercing wind was driving the wild and gloomy clouds of a winter's morning from before the cold face of the expiring moon. A few of her cheerless rays beamed on the dusky windows, and threw a sickly gleam over the water which some heavy rain had left in the desolate road.

It was that silent hour, when the busy multitudes who throng its streets were sunk to rest. The sons of labour had not yet risen to seek a scanty subsistence, and the children of fortune had just left the glittering scenes of earthly enjoyment—not a sound met his ear, but the shrill whistling of the wind—the

hasty foot of some solitary pedestrian—or the melancholy cry, of the watch. Yet the dreary scene possessed a dismal charm for Evanmore. It was in unison with his mind—it seemed the hushed repose of bitter disappointment. The wind blew gratefully over his beating temples, and he lingered to catch its refreshing breeze, till he was roused by a noise behind him so strange—so mournful—so hollow—he started with instinctive terror: he turned, and saw that the wind had blown down a fire-screen that hung suspended over an uncovered harp, which stood at the extremity of the library. It was Rosalind's; and as it glided over the resounding chords, it seemed to Evanmore like the wild requiem which superstition might pour out as the knell of a departing spirit. A cold chilly sensation crept over his frame, and he quitted the window to finish his letter to Felicia. With averted eyes he passed the miniature of Rosalind; and taking Felicia's from the recess in which he had placed it, inclosed it unopened with his letter. He made no allusion to the past; but, in tremulous characters, he wrote on its envelope, "Let the remembrance of the time when I deserved this, be mingled with pity and forgiveness; and oh, teach my child to resemble thee!" The window was yet open, and a low wind moaned through the strings of the harp, as he folded this last memorial of his love for her and his child. It sounded like the wail of some one in distress. Rosalind, deserted by her betrayer, a prey to shame and disappointment, rose to his imagination; and a sensation of pity, for the first time, shot through his lacerated heart.

"Shall I mourn the blasted ambition of her who has destroyed me!" he said. "No;" and stern resentment flashed from his eyes. "Let her feel as I have felt." Again the breeze swept the strings of the harp. He started—was it an illusion of his senses disturbed by the awful situation in which he stood! No, once more a wild and feeble melody breathed along its quivering chords. He trembled, and cast a fearful glance around—all was still, save a few neglected shrubs, dark and withered, that gently waved with a sad mournful noise against the window: they were Rosalind's—"Rosalind!" he frantically exclaimed. No voice replied to his, and he shuddered at the dreary sensation that followed his frenzied cry. No wife—no Rosalind was there: he felt he was indeed alone—deserted—abandoned—oh, the horror of that moment! He hastily rose from his chair. His feelings were too highly wrought to endure his situation, and he determined to seek his child, imprint on her lips a father's last fond kiss. As he rapidly brushed by the table, he threw down a large volume; he would have passed it, but by the light he bore in his unsteady hand, he saw it was his mother's Bible. He stooped involuntarily to take it up—it was open—and as he placed it on the table he saw,

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

He started, and with a deep groan sunk again on his chair. The unction he had before laid to his soul—the flimsy, yet specious, arguments with which he had hitherto lulled the reproaches of his conscience, no longer possessed power to deceive him—"Could he hope for that pardon from Omnipotence which he withheld from a fellow worm? Could he hope to be received into the mansions of the blessed, who left this world a victim to his own passions? Could he dare to anticipate future happiness, covered with the blood of a fellow-creature? Could he any longer aspire to protection or acceptance, who had impiously dared to oppose the revealed will of his offended Maker, snatched from his almighty hands the privilege of avenging his wrongs? Could he recede—could he decline to meet Lord Edgermond?" he asked himself, in a faltering voice, as these reflections crowded to his palsied mind. "No. If he were to draw back from that meeting he had solicited, he should be branded as a coward and a bully. Even the desertion of his wife might be ascribed to her personal contempt for his character. The finger of scorn would be pointed against him, the glance of derision or contumely would ever meet his eye. No, retreat was impossible; and why should he thus add bitterness to the cup of misery he was compelled to drink?" But vainly he tried to reconcile his conscience to the step he was taking—the doctrines of Christianity with those of fashionable life. "My kingdom is not of this world," flashed on his senses; and the words he had so singularly seen, "*Vengeance is mine, I will repay,*" seemed written in characters of fire on his brain.

With just sentiments, but wavering resolution, no one can be truly good. Evanmore was incapable of boldly pursuing that path which can alone lead to happiness. He had *personal courage*, but not *mental intrepidity*: he was deficient in that noble firmness which gives dignity to principle, and inflexibility to virtue; and in the perilous hour of trial he sunk a victim to that temptation against which he had no real shield of defence.

With agitated steps he sought the apartment of his child—some minutes elapsed ere he could open the door, and glide to her little couch. She was fast buried in the balmy slumbers of care-less childhood. Her dark shining hair curled in luxuriant disorder over her ivory forehead, and long silken lashes rested on her rosy cheek. Her dimpled hands were laid on her guileless bosom, and the smile that half played over her ruby lip spoke innocence and peace. Her strong resemblance to himself was more strikingly apparent in the repose of her features as she slept.

"And I was once like thee!" he thought. "Oh, that I had never survived that blissful period!" He knelt by her side, and, as he bent his head to imprint a kiss on her downy cheek, scalding tears gushed from his eyes. He raised his hands in silent prayer. "Oh, Father!" he breathed, "bless this helpless babe, and equally preserve her from the faults of both her parents! Oh!

visit not on her their sins ! Oh, pity and protect her whom they have abandoned ! When her father and her mother have alike deserted her, be Thou her shield ! raise her up some safer, firmer guardian, who shall never leave her nor forsake her ! ”

It was the cry of nature—the voice of *genuine supplication* ; and, though clouded by frailty and error, it reached the throne of Mercy.

A loud rap interrupted these intercessions—a deep groan burst from his lips, and, starting from his knees, he fled from the presence of his child.

He had scarcely gained the library, and acquired that serenity of manner which it was so necessary to assume, when his second was ushered into the room.

“ Ha, my good fellow, glad to see you are ready—been preparing all things against the worst, I perceive. Well, I’ll take care and fulfil all your wishes.” He seated himself near the table, and taking out a case of pistols, examined the flints, snapped them ; and after this investigation of their merits, pronounced they were the “ very best in Christendom.”

Evanmore felt an involuntary sensation of disgust. It seemed almost insult at such a moment to offer these idle flippant remarks to him ; and without speaking, he began to seal up the packet he had directed to Felicia, while his friend, quite unconscious of his feelings, continued his observations.

He was an acquaintance introduced by Rosalind, with whom his gaiety and thoughtlessness had made him a great favourite. As he drove a phaeton in grand style, played admirably at billiards, and was good-humoured, Evanmore had also found him a very agreeable acquaintance ; and having been engaged in one or two affairs of the same nature before, had been selected by him, as the fittest person he knew, to accompany him to the field.

“ ’Tis time to be off, I fancy,” said he, watching with the eager gaze of impatient restlessness Evanmore’s motions, drawing out his watch, and carefully depositing his pistols in his pocket as he spoke. “ I never like to be late on such occasions : there’s a great deal in measuring the ground with the eye beforehand.”

Evanmore caught up his hat and gloves, and with a hurried “ I am ready,” walked rapidly down stairs. He opened the hall door with the stern composure of one determined to brave the whisperings of nature, the voice of conscience ; and though when it fell from his grasp, and he heard it close on him, as he believed, for ever, a chill ran through his icy veins, he proudly walked on.

They were the first who reached the place of rendezvous. Lord Edgermond was not yet arrived, and while Evanmore leaned thoughtfully against a tree, till he should appear, his companion commenced the duties of his office. His soul was occupied by the part he was to act in this horrid drama, absorbed in the desire to acquit himself with credit as the second in an affair of honour ; and while he paced the ground, wiped the pistols, and

prepared the loading, his thoughts were bent in contriving a paragraph which should announce to the *beau-monde* that he had again assisted in arming his fellow-creatures against each other.

"Evanmore!" cried he, hastily stepping up to him, as he saw Lord Edgermond and Colonel Vavasour approach them, "as you are the injured man to all intents and purposes, perhaps Lord Edgermond will offer you the first fire; at all events I shall most likely be called upon to give the word; and mark me,—for there's a good deal of knack in these sort of things,—I will pause a good while between once and twice; but the moment I cry twice, be ready to fire that instant; for I will say thrice, before Lord Edgermond is aware of what I am about; and you——"

"Sir!" cried Evanmore, turning from him with scorn and abhorrence, "do you think I will deign to take an unfair advantage of even—*him*!"

Mr. Berrindale looked at him with angry amazement. He had even some indistinct suspicion that he ought to resent this ungrateful attack on his honour; but before it acquired any strength, the appearance of Lord Edgermond and his second gave a new turn to his ideas.

"Is it impossible," said Colonel Vavasour, "that this unhappy affair may not be adjusted without——"

"Impossible, sir!" interrupted Mr. Berrindale. "My friend's injured honour admits of no other redress."

"From the laws of his country he has already received reparation," pursued Colonel Vavasour, whose distinguished bravery and exalted character rendered him peculiarly calculated to conduct such a meeting.

"Money can be deemed no compensation for Mr. Evanmore's wrongs," said Mr. Berrindale.

"True!" said Evanmore, fiercely starting forward as he spoke. Colonel Vavasour bowed, and in a few moments the ground was measured.

"I am commissioned by Lord Edgermond to offer you the first fire sir," said Colonel Vavasour, advancing towards Evanmore.

"Sir," cried Evanmore, while a smile of bitter anguish passed over his lips, "I will accept no favours from Lord Edgermond. Let him take the life he has rendered miserable. And do you, Colonel Vavasour" (he looked resentfully at his unfeeling second), "do you give the signal."

A dead and awful silence followed. Colonel Vavasour pronounced the fatal words, and both fired at the same moment. Evanmore started—his pistol dropped from his palsied hand—he staggered a few paces, and fell on the ground. The surgeon in attendance sprung to his assistance, and, with feelings of manly grief and commiseration, Colonel Vavasour took him in his arms, and raised him from the earth.

"I believe your lordship had better fly," said the surgeon, as

he fixed his eyes on the death-like countenance of the fainting Evanmore.

Lord Edgermond instantly left the field.

"I feel all is over!" said Evanmore, as they bore him to the carriage, roused from insensibility by extreme torture. "Take me home—let me see my child once more! And you," glancing his dying eyes at his sympathising supporter, "you had better leave me."

"No, never," said Colonel Vavasour. "My obligations to the uncle of your adversary forbid my declining this painful office, or I had spurned it. And I will brave all till I see you safely conveyed to your own residence." Evanmore feebly pressed his hand, and after a dreadful ride, he was placed on the bed he had left only a few short hours before full of life and health, never to leave it more.

CHAP. XX.

"Though writhing and smarting, yet welcome the rod,
Though in doubt and in darkness, oh, lean on thy God." NBALB.

COLONEL VAVASOUR had received so many personal obligations from Lord Wilberton, that he could not refuse to attend his nephew and only heir on such an occasion; but he was too well acquainted with the nature of Evanmore's injuries to feel any thing but detestation for his opponent, and had too sincere a dislike to the unchristian-like practice of duelling, not to feel extremely averse to acting as a second.

In the field of battle, where man is opposed to man, not in enmity, but to defend their dearest rights, and protect all that makes life valuable, he had fought with a determined intrepidity that had raised him from a lowly origin to affluence and fame. But he revolted from scenes of bloodshed which are produced by personal animosity, to gratify a spirit of deep implacable revenge: nor could he be made to believe that the honour of any individual can be in the power of another, or depend on the opinion of the world. He considered courage one of the noblest properties of man; but it was courage exerted on a lawful occasion that met his admiration—excited his applause; and had he not felt himself bound by those ties of gratitude to his patron, which a generous bosom longs to repay, he would have positively declined to be a party in such a transaction. Even now, the certainty that he could not prevent the meeting, the hope that he might be able to avert it, contributed to overcome his repugnance to countenance what he deemed cold-blooded illegal murder. Recoiling from the hateful task, he proceeded to Lord Edgermond's hotel, and learnt from his valet that his lordship had desired he would

walk into his room, should he arrive before he was dressed. He followed the man up stairs, and on entering the apartment, saw his lordship was still calmly reposing. A book lay on the chair by his bed, and his burnt-out taper showed he had been reading till it was consumed. As he approached the bed, he felt curious to learn the nature of a work which could interest a man at such a period; and, glancing his eyes over the half-open volume, he saw it was "The Rivals." He felt an involuntary sensation of mingled pity and indignation. How was that mind organised which could employ its, perhaps, last hours in perusing a play, inimitable as a work of amusement, but too well calculated to undermine the principles, and hold up to ridicule the most important and awful scenes in which man can be engaged! How callous that heart which could derive entertainment from such a source, the night before it might consummate the wretchedness it had begun, by robbing the injured Evanmore of life, or be itself cold in the icy grasp of death!

These reflections were interrupted by a yawn from Lord Edgermond; and, after complimenting Colonel Vavasour on his punctuality, observing that he had had a very good night, and requesting he would go into the next room and prepare them some coffee, he sprung out of bed, and dressed himself with his usual care—bestowed even more than ordinary attention upon his teeth, and at breakfast found fault with his man for having neglected to procure them some potted meat.

Colonel Vavasour regarded him with augmented feelings of compassion. His heart had never quailed in the ensanguined plains of the Peninsula, or the bloody field of Waterloo; but he had felt that the pause before he rushed into battle—before he found himself opposed to an enemy—on the brink of eternity, was one of deep and awful interest: nor had he ever felt ashamed of the sensation.

Anxious to arouse his sleeping conscience from the insensibility in which it lay steeped, he asked if he had arranged his affairs; inquired what he would wish to be done should he fall; and the course he meant to pursue should Mr. Evanmore, on the contrary, be the victim to their meeting.

Lord Edgermond heard him with apparent surprise; replied with haughty indifference that he had no arrangements to make—would not trouble him with any commissions; and that it would be time enough to think of his future plans when the issue was decided.

Colonel Vavasour became still more averse from lending his assistance; but again the hope that he might perhaps be instrumental in moderating the rancour of the one, and awakening the sensibility of the other, impelled him to persevere; and not till he saw Evanmore's agonised sense of dishonour, and Lord Edgermond's frozen composure, did he resign the attempt as hopeless. He had seen the guilty author of this scene blooming

in loveliness; and while he deplored the misdirected spirit which urged him to such a step, he pitied the wretched husband from whom so rare a gem had been infamously wrested.

He accompanied the dying Evanmore to his forsaken home, and understanding he had no friend or relative in town, determined not to leave him while life throbbed in his languid veins. The wound he had received was of so decided and dangerous a nature, that his medical attendant entertained few hopes he would survive while on the field, and those hopes, slender as they were, vanished the instant he had examined it.

In paroxysms of agony, succeeded by successive fits, Evanmore passed the day; but towards evening the pains he had endured became less excruciating, and with the first dawning of corporeal ease he thought of his child. "Oh, let me see her!" he cried, perceiving his attendants feared to bring her to him. "A few fleeting hours are my utmost span—it matters not that they may be shortened."

Colonel Vavasour motioned for her to be brought into the room. Evanmore turned his dying eyes on the door—it opened—and she entered in her nurse's arms. She screamed with delight on seeing him. "But papa is ill!" she cried, in a changing voice, as she marked his pallid hue and sunken eye, "poor papa is ill—Rosa will kiss him well again;" and springing from her attendant, she tried to climb upon the bed.

"Oh, never, never," said he; "thy father is lost to thee for ever!" and clasping his arms around her slender form, as Colonel Vavasour placed her by his side, he burst into a torrent of tears.

"Colonel Vavasour," said he, at length trying to acquire strength and fortitude, "on my library table there is a packet directed to Miss Leycester, the aunt of this poor babe, which I intrust to your care. I know you will deliver it, for yours is another heart like hers. It contains a petition that she will be the guardian and protectress of this dear pledge of—an unfortunate union. Oh, that I could know she would accept the trust—that I could hear her say she will be its protector—that I could place it in her arms!"

"Let me then fetch her!" said Colonel Vavasour.

"Do you think she would come?" said he, with anxious eagerness.

"I have no doubt of it," he replied. "If only half of what I have heard of Miss Leycester be true, she will willingly visit you in your affliction, and happy will be the fate of your child, even when you shall cease to be its protector."

"And she—she might have been my wife!" thought Evanmore, as he listened to this eulogium. "Had I married her, I should now have been a happy husband—a proud father!" A mist arose before his eyes, and sinking on his pillow, he lost all remembrance of his wrongs and sufferings.

Colonel Vavasour had heard something of Evanmore's former engagement to Felicia; but he was unacquainted with either; and nearly four years had now so completely obliterated the story from his remembrance, that not till he saw Evanmore's changing hue, was he aware of the error he had committed. Lamenting his inadvertence, he darted out of the house, called a coach, and soon reached Portman Square. He inquired for Miss Leycester, and was told she could not be seen. "But I have business, particular business with her," said he. "Tell her I am the bearer of a request from Mr. Evanmore."

The servant again sought Felicia, and in a few moments Colonel Vavasour was ushered into the room where she sat. Her pale countenance and swollen eyes informed him she was no stranger to the situation of Mr. Evanmore; and deeply touched by the disinterestedness of her grief, he felt for her increased sentiments of respect. In plain, but energetic language, he stated Evanmore's wishes, and without presuming to urge her compliance, hinted at the satisfaction she would hereafter receive from thinking she had soothed the pillow of his wretched friend.

Felicia started as she heard that it was his ardent desire to see her. She had learnt the dreadful result of his unexpected meeting with Lord Edgermond with those overwhelming feelings of grief and horror, which, for a time, paralyse the mind; and, now that the first burst of her emotions was past, contemplated his fate with mingled sentiments of pity and regret. From the interview he solicited, she shrunk with apprehensive delicacy and sickening alarm. But love had no share in her reluctance to visit his more-than-widowed home at this awful period. Compassion, regard, friendship, were the only sentiments she had long felt for Evanmore. Yet while she had by determined resolution, and undeviating virtue, conquered an attachment that would not clearly have conduced to her happiness, she could not contemplate such a meeting without the deepest and keenest feelings. Yet to refuse it—to seem insensible to his last wishes—regardless of his dying petition, would add anguish to his broken heart; and, rising from her chair, after a long and painful struggle, she told Colonel Vavasour she would soon be in readiness to accompany him.

When determined to conquer, she had found it best never to attempt to argue with Lady Wyedale; and her face pale, but resolute, her voice low, but firm, she announced her intention of visiting Mr. Evanmore immediately, and requested that Mr. Leycester, who was then her companion, would escort her to his house.

There was a something so calm, so solemn, so affecting in her deportment and language, that Lady Wyedale could not summon courage to oppose her departure, or level at her motives one sneer of insult or inhumanity.

Mr. Leycester, who watched the turn of her features, availed himself of her situation to say, "There would be great impropriety in my cousin going alone. I am sure, therefore, my dear aunt, you will excuse me;" and, without waiting for a permission he seemed to think he had received, ran down stairs to avoid appearing to act in defiance of her secret wishes.

Flinging on a large wrapping cloak, Felicia descended to the room where Colonel Vavasour was sitting, and, after introducing Mr. Leycester as her cousin, motioned her desire to set off without delay.

As the coach rumbled through the busy streets, Felicia tried to fortify her mind against her approaching trial. "Perhaps he wished to make her the bearer of some message of forgiveness to Rosalind—perhaps to intrust his child to her care—perhaps to solicit her pardon—no, that was a topic on which she thought and believed he had too much delicacy to touch." The coach stopped, as her distracted fancy alternately reverted to these surmises, and she threw an eager, terrified glance upon the house. Nothing met her fearful gaze—all was dark, lonely, and solemn. No lights beamed from the unclosed windows—no sound cheered the dread silence—the stillness of death hung over it.

Colonel Vavasour sprang out, and his low cautious rap was soon answered by Evanmore's servant. He had been in Evanmore's service many years, and was, consequently, acquainted with all that both Felicia and his master had so long wished to consign to oblivion. As he lighted the silent party up stairs, Felicia's eye met his, and, overcome by his regret, he said in a stifled voice, "Oh, Miss Felicia, Miss Felicia, this is a sad day. Oh, that my poor master had never, never come to London!"

As he marked Felicia's varying complexion, Colonel Vavasour gently pressed her arm, and besought her to endeavour to acquire that composure which was so necessary to support her through such a scene. Felicia appreciated this friendly admonition as it deserved, but every moment, in defiance of her efforts, her agitation increased. The dreary stillness that reigned around, unbroken, save by the melancholy sound of their cautious footsteps as they echoed through the deserted mansion—the dim light that just sufficed to show the loneliness of the spacious apartments, on the polished surface of whose superb mirrors the rays of the passing lamp shed a few faint, cold, random beams, like the mournful light of a funeral taper gleaming on the sad ornaments of the last receptacle of man,—all conspired to augment the awfulness of her situation; and, when Colonel Vavasour, at length, slowly opened the door of the chamber of death, she would have fallen but for his supporting arm. He looked earnestly at her, and, by a strong resolve mastering her feelings, she suffered him to lead her to the couch of the expiring Evanmore.

Death was imprinted on his features—the fire of the eye was extinguished—the brow was rigid and stern—a fatal paleness sat upon his cheek that told his heart would soon beat no more. For a moment he seemed overpowered by her presence, and, as his head fell back on his pillow, again a dark cloud passed before his eyes; but he struggled to recover himself, and in a faint, feeble voice expressed his obligations to her for acceding to his desire.

“Colonel Vavasour would tell you,” he continued, in broken accents, “that I——”

“I have had no opportunity of explaining your wishes,” said Colonel Vavasour, “for Miss Leycester was accompanied by her relation: he is now alone, and I will join him. When you have communicated your motives for seeking this interview, I will return to you.” He left the room ere Felicia had power to entreat he would remain, and, agitated and embarrassed, she sunk on a chair, no longer able to sustain her trembling limbs.

“Miss Leycester!” he said, as he marked her internal anguish. “Sister!” his voice faltered. “I have ventured to hope you will become the guardian of this poor helpless innocent,”—he pointed to the child which lay stretched asleep by his side. “Will you—will you deign, in pity to her orphan state, to accept the trust?”

“I will,” said Felicia, in a tremulous, but distinct, tone.

His lips quivered. “Come then, and receive her. Let me see her in your arms, and I shall die satisfied: the death of her father will be no loss to her if—if you——” She advanced; and, bending over the bed, gently took the still-sleeping infant into her arms. A smile of ineffable sweetness lighted up his faded features; he tried to thank her; but the words died on his parched lips, and, covering his face with his hands, he fell back and seemed to sleep.

Felicia dared not rise lest she should interrupt this temporary cessation from pain; the child, too, slumbered in her arms—each instant she hoped he would awake, but the night stole on—a dreadful stillness reigned around, interrupted only by a low wind, which rose and fell in melancholy gusts, or died away in low solemn murmurs. The fire burnt feebly in the grate, and the pale light of a single lamp gleamed fitfully on the sunken countenance of the dying Evanmore.

It was a sad and dismal scene, and, as she listened to the sighing of the storm, she thought on that night when she sat in her solitary apartment, while he was the companion of Rosalind to the masquerade. His graceful figure, his sparkling eye, the proud step of youth and conscious elegance—the smile of joy that then irradiated his striking countenance, rose to her memory with the brightness of reality. She involuntarily threw her eyes on the bed, where lay the mangled form of him she had loved so long and so fondly; then withdrew them with a

start of grief and horror. The contrast was too painful, and the tears she had so long suppressed rolled over her ashy face.

From these mournful meditations she was roused by a deep groan. She sprang from her chair, and was hastening for assistance, when he feebly called her back. "Felicia!" he said, in a scarcely audible whisper. "You are still here?" She approached him. "Let me embrace my child again."

She softly disengaged the little arms that encircled her neck, and was going to place her on the bed.

"No," said he quickly, "don't, don't relinquish her. I like to see her in your arms—sit down near me. I wish—I wish——" His eyes closed—his breathing became short and difficult. Again he opened them, and fixed a dying glance on her agitated features.

"Felicia," he repeated, "come nearer: be not reluctant to approach me. What I have suffered is best known to myself, but all is over—I have now no thought but for my child. At such a moment every other feeling is absorbed by painful anxiety for her, or merges in the awful consideration of death. I see you only as the friend of my happiest days—the soother of the last sad hours of life—the protectress of my babe—the—sister——" His voice faltered, large drops bedewed his cold forehead, a film gradually overspread his eyes, his respiration became quicker.

"Let me see the child!" he said, after a few moments' pause.

Felicia bent forwards, and extended it towards him. His hands were stretched out, but he seemed not to be conscious of her vicinity. "Felicia!" he said, as if doubtful where she was, "I do not see her!" As she endeavoured to place the child within his arms, her hand touched his. "Yet, yet, you are near—How is this? how is this?"

"Ah! is it so?"—he raised his hand to his eyes. "All is dark here! Is death so close, then—so very close?" he faintly shuddered. "But I can feel her!"—and he pressed his cold lips to her blooming cheek. "Poor babe, she sleeps, unconscious that her eyes will never more open on a father's face—that when she wakes, his shall have closed for ever. I cannot see you," he continued, turning to Felicia, "but I know you are an angel of light hovering over my departing soul. Oh! tell me again, you will not permit the faults of this dear innocent's guilty parents to deprive her of your love—that you will cherish her. She has no friend but you. Oh, be her guide—be kinder to her than her earthly parents; for they have abandoned her in her utmost need!"

Felicia's tears fell fast on his hands, and, in a voice broken by emotion, she vowed never to part with the treasure he had thus intrusted to her care. "Never will I forsake her," she cried,

raising her eyes to heaven. "My home shall be her home—my God her God!"

He seized her hand, and pressed it within his own—it was the pressure of dying energy.

"Thy hand once more! The letter I have written you," he said, still grasping her hand, "will explain all my wishes; but on one subject——" A slight convulsion passed over his livid face, and the struggles he made to articulate were long ineffectual; he then said, "It is my dying command, that she never sees her—mother——"

"Evanmore!" said Felicia, in a low, yet firm voice.

He started at the sound—a dark interval seemed suddenly passed away—it was again the entreating voice of Felicia Leycester—that tone in which she used to usher in those gentle admonitions which he had spurned, which would have led him on to virtue and happiness.

"Oh, let me hear that one word again," he said, while a tear trickled from his dim eyes. "Just in that same soft beseeching tone."

"If we would hope that our Heavenly Father may pardon our sins, we must forgive those who have injured us," said she, bending over him with anxious solicitude as she spoke. "Tell me you forgive my dear, my wretched Rosalind. Oh give me permission to say, that you pardon her, even as you hope to be pardoned by Him before whose awful throne you must soon appear."

"Pray for me, Felicia," said he, after a long and fearful pause.

She threw herself on her knees, and fervently implored that the Divine Spirit would soften his heart, blot out all his transgressions, and receive him into the mansions of the blessed. To these prayers were added others for the deluded Rosalind, that she might see her iniquity, that by penitence she might seek the forgiveness of her offended Maker, and that they might all hereafter meet again in heaven.

She ceased; and while large tears chased each other down her face, he again pressed her hand, but he did not speak, and Felicia forbore to urge him further. But she seated herself on a chair close by him; and fondly clasping her slumbering little charge to her bosom, still continued silent supplications to Him who is always ready to hear the sighing of the sorrowful.

Evanmore long appeared buried in a deep sleep; his breathing was hardly perceptible; and had not a slight convulsive motion now and then agitated his pale hand, as it lay lifelessly over the counterpane, she would have thought he had ceased to be an inhabitant of this world.

The cold gleams of a winter morning were streaking the dusky zone of heaven, when he once more unclosed his heavy eyelids.

"Felicia, Heaven has heard your prayers," he murmured. She

hung over him. "I have—and—you may——" his voice grew fainter and fainter every instant, "you may say——" He could not proceed.

"You forgive her!" she said, scarcely articulately.

"Yes—I do—truly—say, I forgive—her——" his hand became cold and clammy; the damps of death sat on his icy forehead. "Sustain me, Felicia, whilst I pass through this terrible—pray again——" Felicia's lips moved, but her words were inaudible. For two hours she continued by his side, incoherently beseeching that he might be supported during these last struggles. He then raised himself up as if desirous of trying to see his child once more: the effort was too much, and he fell back—but he sunk gently, and the repentant spirit disentangled itself without a groan from the earth which encumbered it.

CHAP. XXI.

"Oh, Love can give no form so dear
As his, who sleeps unconscious here!
Nor after-life can ever bless
This aching heart with happiness."

WHEN those whom we have once loved are blotted from the book of life—when death has claimed them for his own, and the grave is preparing to shut them for ever from our sight, "we find excuses for every weakness, palliations of every fault; we recollect a thousand endearments, which before glided off our minds without impression, a thousand favours unrepaid;" we open our eyes to every excellence, and bury in the lustre of their virtues the remembrance of their errors.

As she gazed on the lifeless form of the murdered Evanmore, Felicia cast a look of retrospection on her early years, and mourned, with the bitter tears of anguished regret, the play-fellow of her childhood—the companion of the blissful season of youth. She forgot, that he had deceived her hopes—blighted her visions of happiness. She had given him her whole undivided heart at that sunny season of our existence when the romantic ardour of youth arrays the object of our tenderness with a thousand inexplicable charms. At this sad hour all the unextinguishable love that had lain buried through long years of sorrow, seemed revived. She recollected only, that he was the possessor of her earliest affections—that her faith was pledged to him—that to be united with him in the sacred bonds of marriage had been her prayer—her pride; and, leaning over his breathless form, she embalmed it in the warm tears of pity and forgiveness. While one hand supported the sacred deposit he had committed to her care, with the other she gently closed his eyes; and this

last sad duty, which friendship can pay to departed nature, finished, she wrapped the child in her cloak, and with lingering steps tore herself for ever from the remains of him whom she had loved with a fervour she could never, never feel again.

Colonel Vavasour and Mr. Leycester met her at the door, and conducted her with silent respect into the coach which yet waited, by their orders, to convey her back to Portman Square. They were in an adjacent dressing-room, and the groan that burst from Evanmore's lips, when his sufferings terminated in this world, had revealed what she could not tell.

During her dreary drive, Felicia was unable to speak; but when she reached the house, and saw Mr. Leycester preparing to leave her, she caught his hand, and earnestly thanked him for his kind attention. He seemed more affected than she had imagined he could almost have felt, and, after kindly wishing him adieu, she placed the little Rosa in her own bed, and, throwing herself by her side, soon lost the remembrance of the late awful scene in which she had been engaged.

Words could not paint Lady Wyedale's astonishment and indignation on learning the promise Felicia made to Mr. Evanmore, and that his child was now under her roof. Such a finale to the catastrophe had never in her most sombre moments occurred to her imagination; and for many hours she persisted in declaring that she would turn it out of doors. "She would not be thus duped and imposed upon—she did not care what people said of her," &c. &c. In defiance, however, of these protestations, she did care what people said of her, and, like many others, was more anxious to possess the good opinion of the world than deserve it. To turn out an unoffending infant at such a moment, and under such circumstances, she was aware would be esteemed an act of cruel inhumanity; and, after many bitter struggles between her wishes and her prudence, she permitted her young niece to remain for the present, but determined to take the first favourable opportunity of dismissing her from the house. Her resentment against Felicia now knew no bounds: here she might indulge her feelings without apprehension of their being the subject of animadversion among her friends. Felicia, she knew, was too honourable to betray the secrets of the prison-house, and, depending for security on that very goodness which would have induced a generous bosom to withhold every reproach, she ventured her abuse without restraint or alarm. Felicia bore all in silence. In addition to native gentleness, she had a great point to carry; and at length, weary of uttering what seemed by some magic power to have lost its sting, or was at least incapable of arousing an angry sentiment, she had recourse to another and more ingenious method of annoyance. She shut herself up in her own apartments—assigned indisposition as her reason—refused to speak, excepting when obliged, and affected to be

deeply hurt at the unfeeling treatment she experienced from her only niece,

Felicia was no proof against this mode of warfare, though her better judgment whispered it was only a new scene in the same farce. She could not avoid deploring, that she should have been instrumental in obliging her aunt to submit to what was so unpleasant to her; and her uneasiness became so evident, that, after seeing it some weeks with secret joy, Lady Wyedale began to relent—that is, partly tired of the part she was acting, and partly mollified by her distress. Like many other proficients in the art of tormenting, she usually became tolerably happy herself when she had made all around her miserable, and wisely desisted from her operations, when she found they had taken sufficient effect. Felicia was too prudent to bring the source of dissension into her sight; and though still firmly resolved to drive the child from her roof, when forgetfulness of the mother's desertion, and the father's death, should have ceased to render it an object of commiseration or attention, her ladyship's mind gradually returned to its best frame, namely, negative amiability.

Anxious to comply with all Evanmore's wishes, Felicia put his affairs into the hands of her cousin, Mr. Leycester, who soon made such arrangements with his creditors, as satisfied them that they would eventually be honourably paid. The splendid house which the thoughtless Rosalind had so improperly fitted up, was sold, together with its expensive furniture; and after every demand had been discharged, Mr. Leycester thought there would be a surplus of a few hundred pounds for the little Rosalind Evanmore. For these exertions in favour of his young relative, Felicia felt so obliged, and expressed herself so gratefully, that, after bestowing mature thought on the subject, Mr. Leycester now deemed this the most proper period for striking that grand and decisive blow he had so long meditated. He seized an opportunity, presented by her absence, to solicit a few minutes' conversation with Lady Wyedale. With hesitation and embarrassment that was not altogether feigned, he then declared his attachment to his cousin, acknowledged that he had not a fortune which he considered as equivalent to her expectations, "yet as he was prudent, in a rising and honourable profession, and was, in *family connexions*, on a *par* with herself, he hoped he should not be deemed, on reflection, so presumptuous as he might at first appear. Miss Leycester's habits and his own were so retired and economical, he had no doubt they should, even now, be able to support their station in society with honour and respectability; and as he had the most flattering prospects of success, he hoped his aunt would not refuse her concurrence, should Felicia consent to receive his addresses. He had not yet solicited her hand, because he was not quite assured she would sanction the attachment, and after what she had gone through with one niece, he was resolved not to be instrumental in giving her a moment's un-

easiness respecting the other. He should deeply deplore her refusal to intercede for him with his cousin, but he should acquiesce without a murmur. He only hoped this candid disclosure would exonerate him from all blame in her eyes—would not rob him of her regard."

Lady Wyedale, when he commenced this harangue, felt dubious whether to be pleased or angry; as, however, he proceeded, the former preponderated. He was her nephew. His hint that his family pretensions were not inferior to Felicia's had its due weight. Her antipathy to the Beauclercs remained fresh as when they first disdained their connection with the Leycesters; but she did not feel averse to the idea of perpetuating their noble blood in her family. James Leycester, independent of these claims to her favour, had acquired an interest in her heart, deeper than she was herself aware of. His unceasing, yet unmarked attentions—his regard for his father's family and mansion—his prudence—his abilities—his person—his address—his rising affluence—all conspired to place him in a favourable point of view. Nor were these his only claims to her regard: he had gradually become important to her as a legal adviser, and gratuitous conductor of those numerous lawsuits in which her litigious spirit was continually involving her with her dependants.

Though always contending for power and command, and always believing herself the wisest of mankind, Lady Wyedale was beginning to entertain (not without reason) some indistinct remote apprehensions, which she, however, neither wished to strengthen nor approximate, that she had been made the dupe of artifice—overreached by those whose understandings she despised, and whose vulgarity and ignorance *must*, she thought, have kept them in the straight path of honesty. Mr. Leycester had opportunely interfered to save her from the consequences of some of the ill-advised steps she had taken; and taught her to discover, what she could never have surmised without his assistance, that, in defiance of her faith in bad English and bad grammar, she had much more to fear from clown-craft than either priest-craft or witch-craft. He was, therefore, no longer the James Leycester she would formerly have seen in want and rags without remorse; and, after some slight hesitation, intended to render compliance more valuable, she at length gave a half-expressed assent to his formally declaring himself the lover of his cousin.

Mr. Leycester's demonstrations of joy and expressions of gratitude were perfectly ingenuous. He had played a difficult game, and come off victorious. Mr. Berkely's long delayed declaration of attachment had induced him to think he had either been mistaken in supposing him her lover, or that Rosalind's infamy had impelled him to resign his intention of soliciting her hand; and Felicia's late alteration of manner towards himself, united with the dejection he noticed when first Mr. Berkely left London,

impelled him to believe he should not find it so difficult to secure a place in her heart as he had once imagined. She was hurt, perhaps displeased, at Mr. Berkely's conduct—the only man she had ever really loved was cold in his silent grave, and even should she refuse him, he had gained a great and important advantage,—Lady Wyedale would resent her behaviour—a breach might ensue between them—at all events, this continual opposition to her will would tend to sour Lady Wyedale's temper, and probably induce her to make a more even distribution of her fortune. He admired Felicia extremely, though he would not have felt an instant's uneasiness if told he should never see her again, and felt persuaded she would make so excellent a wife, that he determined not to suffer the prize to escape him if possible. This *dénouement* was, however, accelerated by the introduction of little Rosalind. She was the only child of his once most powerful competitor; and if Felicia did not marry, and continued to retain her in the house, might grow up a little less dangerous adversary. He therefore resolved to fix her ladyship's attention on either his cousin or himself, before she could be old enough to step into her mother's situation.

Felicia heard his avowal of affection with the utmost surprise and chagrin. His behaviour had, indeed, been marked by the most respectful, and even assiduous attentions; but, accustomed to believe, that it is possible a man may be the friend of a woman without once wishing to be her lover, she had seen nothing more in his manner than their situation fully authorised. With many expressions of regret, she declined the honour he intended her, and then retired to her apartment more distressed at the idea of having inflicted pain, than Rosalind would formerly have felt elated at the acquisition of a new admirer. Her meditations on this unexpected occurrence were broken in upon by Lady Wyedale, who came to insist upon her acceptance of Mr. Leycester's addresses. She had had a long interview with her nephew, and came prepared to conquer or die. Again Felicia repeated her determination to live unmarried, but it had lost the charm of novelty, and, moreover, was not accompanied by the same well-timed compliment that secured it so agreeable a reception at Weymouth: it was, therefore, treated with the most profound contempt; while, irritated at her perseverance, and exasperated at her folly, her ladyship summed up the measure of her reproaches, by accusing her of cherishing a strong secret attachment towards Mr. Berkely. The hint on which this charge was founded she had just received from Mr. Leycester; and every passion in arms at the bare supposition, the remotest possibility of having been deceived, she reserved it as a *coup de grace* for the conclusion of their argument, should Felicia prove adverse to her wishes. Felicia replied to this angry impeachment of her delicacy with the calm composure of conscious innocence, though her cheeks were dyed with blushes.

"If it were so, madam, I should not be deserving of censure or contempt, unless I improperly betrayed my regard; for it is not disgraceful to be alive to the virtues of an excellent man. I beg, however, your ladyship will not be distressed on this subject. Mr. Berkely has never solicited my affections, nor have I any reason to suppose he will." Something like a sigh followed this declaration; and turning from Lady Wyedale's scrutinising gaze, she tried to persuade herself she felt happy that she could thus remove her ladyship's apprehensions.

Lady Wyedale felt only half satisfied with this dubious reply; one thing was, however, certain, Mr. Berkely had never clandestinely sought to gain her heart, and she had only to discover whether he would be accepted, should he, at some future time, think proper to come forward. But there she was unsuccessful; Felicia evaded every direct question. She confined herself to repeating that she was sorry she could not return her cousin's affection, and to assuring her aunt she had not the smallest reason to believe that Mr. Berkely would ever endeavour to win her hand. Lady Wyedale, appeased by this knowledge, at length quitted the room to relieve Mr. Leycester from the dread she thought he entertained of having a rival in John Berkely. On that head she felt much more uneasiness than he did. He, however, received the information as was befitting his character—thanked his aunt again and again for her kindness, which he assured her he should never, never forget; and, with a lover-like hope that his cousin, since her affections were *really disengaged*, might hereafter be induced to regard him with more favourable sentiments, returned to his lodgings, if not with the gaiety of a successful wooer, at least without the usual uneasiness of a rejected one.

CHAP. XXII.

"—I have passed through many a painful year,
While firm, though friendless, I have stood alone
Opposed to all which others shun and fear.
The fool's reproof, the worldly-wise man's sneer
On me have fallen, and yet, perhaps, may fall—;
But vain is hate, where Friendship could not cheer;
Fate hath long changed my heart's best blood to gall,
For love comes never there, nor hope, which comes to all."
BROOKER.

THIS, as Felicia at first considered it, unimportant event in her little history, was, as she subsequently found, of more consequence than she had imagined.

Lady Wyedale felt that she could not have an open quarrel with her niece because she refused to form a connection, by no means advantageous, with a man she did not love, to please her;

but yet it rankled at her heart, and Felicia's continual opposition to her will, together with her continual conquests whenever there was a point of any moment in dispute between them, excited her warmest displeasure. She could not bear the superiority of that mind before which she felt her own always sink into insignificance; and the smothering flame being gently cherished by a judicious breeze from Mr. Leycester, who saw Felicia's ascendancy, on one point especially, with dismay—she at length determined to shake off the galling yoke, assert her independence, and evince her own power in her own house.

"Pray, Miss Leycester," said she, one evening, when ready primed for a quarrel by a run of ill-luck at cards, as they sat over the fire after their company had retired, "pray, Miss Leycester, what may be your intentions respecting your darling *protégée*?" Felicia was silent. Her intentions were scarcely known to herself.

"Do you suppose I shall permit my house to be made a nursery for all the beggars' brats in the country? If you do, you are mightily mistaken. I will not encourage vice and disobedience, I assure you, ma'am. I have countenanced you in this whim too long either for your respectability or my own, and I now require you to dismiss the noisy little wretch without further opposition."

"If your ladyship insists upon the removal of my little niece, it is not for me to contend; but I will candidly own I was in hopes, that the consideration of her more than orphan state would induce you to shelter her unprotected infancy; and I still trust, my dear aunt, you ——"

"I undertake the care of another child!" said Lady Wyedale. "Yea, truly, I have had fine encouragement in the behaviour of her mother." Her cheek glowed with rage: she had now entered on a subject fertile in dissension, and her eloquence, like the rushing waters of an impetuous cataract, gathered strength as it proceeded. "No, ma'am, I don't affect to be a *saint*; but it shall never be said my house is the asylum of sin and shame. No, her profligate mother shall not continue her course of infamy without a pang, secure that I am the protectress of the child she has deserted. After all my kindness to her, to be so treated—I that loved her better than myself, and from attachment palliated those errors for which all the rest of the world were ready to condemn her! No, I have suffered enough from the mother! I will so far profit by my misfortune as never to subject myself to the possibility of similar behaviour from the daughter; besides, I think it wicked, absolutely wicked, to afford assistance to the child of such an abandoned, dissolute woman. It is to give open encouragement to sin."

"But the babe," said Felicia, taking advantage of a pause, made to recover breath to proceed, "the babe is guiltless of its mother's crime; and if your ladyship refuses to succour its in-

fancy, who shall teach it to shun the errors that have led to its mother's ruin?"

"What is that to me?" cried she, every feature swelling with rage. "Am I to be made answerable for the support and education of the children of a niece who has abused my confidence, destroyed my peace, and brought disgrace on my name and family? No; let the Evanmores take the precious charge."

"Mr. Evanmore had no *near* relations," said Felicia. Compassion she knew often survives the wreck of better feelings; and anxious, if possible, to awaken a spark in the flinty bosom of Lady Wyedale, she expressed her conviction that his distant relatives would not extend the hand of kindness to his little orphan.

"Then it must go to a workhouse," said Lady Wyedale. "I know no place more proper for it. The sins of the fathers are to be visited upon the children, we are told in the Bible, and that is authority which I presume you will not attempt to dispute."

"The sins of the fathers are necessarily visited upon the children," said Felicia, "because they must, according to the ordinary course of worldly events, be involved in the dishonour of their parents; but I cannot interpret the awful denunciation of an offended Creator into a command that we, his guilty creatures should withhold from the helpless and innocent that forgiveness and pity which have so often been declared to be the foundation of all virtue."

"Very well, ma'am, then put in practice what you esteem virtue immediately, and find some other abode for your plaything to-morrow. I will not incur the responsibility of providing for the child of Lord Edgermond's kept mistress, I assure you. And remember, if ever you have the audacity to mention this subject to me again, we part for ever."

"Madam," replied Felicia, whose temper had scarcely been able to brook this cruel allusion to Rosalind, "if you compel me to remove the infant from under your roof, you must be aware I can no longer find a shelter with you. I solemnly assured Mr. Evanmore, in his last moments, that I would never abandon his child; and, however I may lament that I cannot reconcile my duty to you with my promise to him, I must abide by it."

Lady Wyedale stood silent from passion and amazement; but it was the silence which precedes the fierce howling of the tempest, after its rage has for a moment been suspended.

Furious herself at opposition, she was unable to comprehend that it was possible any one could really be firm and decided, without expressing equal wrath; and, deceived by the calmness of Felicia's manner, this intelligence was not more provoking than astonishing.

"As you please, Miss Leycester," she at length cried, collecting with difficulty her breath, that she might pour forth the reproaches and taunts that crowded to her mind. "As you please; I was

not unprepared for this stroke. I always thought it probable your mean, shameful attachment to Mr. Evanmore would impel you to relinquish me, rather than his offspring."

"I lament," said Felicia, while a deep blush of shame suffused her face, "that your ladyship should ascribe so improper a motive to my conduct—the purity of my attachment to my little Rosalind——"

"Oh, no doubt," interrupted Lady Wyedale, "it would be the height of illiberality to suspect the purity of such a saint; but I am not to be so deceived—the world—the Berkelys—shall not be so deceived—I will make a point of unmasking you. I will tell them that you sowed the seeds of unhappiness between your sister and her husband! You went to her house uninvited, to display your fancied perfection to him after he had deserted you. You were on no terms with her long before her flight. You know it, and I know it, for her maid told mine so. And I will tell the Berkelys that to cherish the child of Mr. Evanmore, you have left in her age and sickness your father's sister." Tears now burst from her eyes, and she sobbed with hysterical violence, till Felicia, roused to resentment by this threat, and aware that her tears flowed from passion, not disappointed affection, said, with assumed calmness,—

"The opinion of the world is with me a secondary consideration; however I may desire to escape its obloquy, I know that the approbation of my own conscience is of far greater importance to my peace; and deeply as I must deplore that your ladyship's ill-grounded suspicions should deprive me of the esteem of a family for whom I entertain so sincere a regard and respect, I cannot permit any selfish feelings to interfere with my sense of duty, with the sacred obligations of an oath."

This unfortunate compliment to the Berkelys completed Lady Wyedale's exasperation. "Really! Why, you ought to be quite obliged to me for thus giving you the opportunity of exercising your goodness. You are now persecuted for righteousness' sake; I see your form erect with noble daring. In your own estimation you stand a martyr. Pride is not one of the sins you pious people include in your decalogue, is it?"

"Patience, I think your ladyship must at least believe we esteem a virtue," rose to Felicia's lips; but she checked it, and bore in silence this unmerited reproach.

"You are then decided!" said she, after a pause, during which she vainly hoped Felicia might afford her some pretence for her violence. "You are determined to leave me!"

"Oh, aunt, if in pity to me and the poor babe, you will allow it——"

"Go, then!" she cried, her little person active beyond its usual activity, and rage lending additional strength to her foot, as she stamped the ground, "Go—go instantly——"

"It is very late," said Felicia, in a voice of mingled alarm and

supplication. "Your ladyship will, I hope, permit me to remain until morning."

"Remain till morning! No. If you are determined to sacrifice me to Evanmore's bantling, you shall go instantly—this moment. I will not shelter such an ungrateful wretch an instant longer."

Felicia approached the bell. "Your ladyship will then, I trust, allow your servants to call me a coach, and conduct me in safety to some respectable asylum."

"At their peril, let any of them execute your commissions. I will be the only mistress over my own domestics—the head in my own house."

Felicia felt an involuntary sensation of alarm at this unexpected act of violent oppression; and she walked with trembling steps to the window. The night was dark and starless, the lamps burnt feebly in the solitary square, and with a face of anxiety and terror, she exclaimed, "It is impossible I can go alone to call a coach, if any yet remain, at such an hour, an unprotected woman, —"

"Oh, don't be apprehensive," said Lady Wyedale, whose spirit always rose in proportion as she perceived Felicia's begin to decline, "don't be afraid of trusting yourself alone; your beauty is not of so transcendent a quality, that you need be in the least apprehensive of the consequences of your tamerity—nobody will run away with you."

"Probably not," said Felicia, who now began to entertain a hope that, by an occasional rejoinder, she might detain her ladyship in conversation till it would be impossible for her, however inclined, so far to forget the claims of decency and humanity, as to drive out her niece, a wanderer into the streets of the metropolis; "but though no disastrous consequences might arise from such a step, its remembrance would attach itself unpleasantly both to your ladyship and myself."

"I despise your innuendo," cried Lady Wyedale; "your artfulness may, indeed, influence some of your beloved saints to think of me with contempt and abhorrence; but, thank God, I am above their malevolence, and spurn at their censures. I shall never be influenced by the opinion of fools and bigots."

In spite of this declaration, Felicia found she had touched the right string, and that it spoke. Lady Wyedale was perpetually boasting of her freedom from the enslaving shackles of those she denominated enthusiasts, — a name indiscriminately applied to all who appeared influenced by better principles than herself; but it had long been evident to Felicia's penetration that her freedom existed more in theory than practice, and that when in the society she affected to despise, she rather tried to think than feel herself unconstrained or superior.

"I grieve that you can think so meanly of me," said Felicia, "as to imagine I shall communicate even to my dearest friend

any thing tending to reflect upon the character of my only relative—that relative, my father's sister.”—Felicia's voice trembled: she had begun in the hope of awaking the feelings of her auditor; there she was unsuccessful; but the chord vibrated her own. Lady Wyedale—the capricious, unfeeling Lady Wyedale, faded before her eyes, and she beheld her only as the aunt—the sister of a father now mouldering in the grave. The remembrance of present harshness merged in the recollection of former kindness. She had received her when she had no other asylum to shield her—protected the infancy of a sister dear, though guilty; and that she had failed to execute with fidelity and ability so important a trust might, she thought ought, partly to be ascribed to the errors which attended her own education. She lamented that she was parting on terms of animosity with so near a relative, one too, whose situation even entitled her to be regarded with duty; and her eyes swimming in tears, she approached Lady Wyedale, who stood with anger in her face, defiance in her attitude, once more to sue for pity for the babe; or if it were vain to hope that she would guard its youth, entreat her forgiveness of the step she felt she was compelled to take.

Lady Wyedale saw the workings of her soul, the struggles between contending feelings and interests; but she now knew Felicia's character too well to doubt that she would resign what she deemed a superior to a lesser duty. Implacable in her resentments, and narrow in her policy, she resolved her house should be no refuge to the destitute child of the disobedient, guilty Rosalind; and, hopeless of Felicia's compliance with her wishes, viewed her agitated countenance without a sentiment of pity and remorse.

“You know the terms of our intercourse, Miss Leycester,” said she, when Felicia, after this futile effort to arouse her compassion had failed, expressed a hope that she might occasionally be permitted to visit in Portman Square.

“Conquer your misplaced, improper attachment for the daughter of Mr. Evanmore, and remain with me, or we separate for ever.”

Felicia sunk into a chair. But Lady Wyedale's was not a heart that ever felt the soft relentings of pity. She moved towards the bell; Felicia started; she feared it was to drive her from her presence: the hoarse tones of the watch proclaiming the hour of twelve, and a rainy night, seemed to check the half-formed intention. She turned to the breathless Felicia,

“Miss Leycester, you may remain till morning; I then expect you to leave my house, accompanied by the little child for whom you indulge so guilty a passion. We have met for the last time.”

“Oh, say not so!” cried Felicia. “Let me hope, that should sickness or declining years require the zeal and care of unbought attachment, you will again receive me to your bosom.”

The dignified calmness Lady Wyedale had suddenly thought

it proper to assume was overpowered by this injudicious allusion, as she imagined, to her declining health and departing youth.

"I thank you, miss," she replied, resentment and spite illuminating every feature; "but I hope I am not so near death as you seem to flatter yourself; and when I am, thank God, I can always secure as kind attentions as those you are disposed to press upon me; as disinterested ones, I am sure I can. I know your secret opinion of me,—the charitable views taken of my character by your saintly aunt Beauclerc, and instilled like venom into your veins. You would only attend me in the hope of securing, what you perhaps deem your right, forgetting that you and your charming sister are not my only relations; and every hireling in my house can but be influenced by similar motives." She seized a taper as she spoke, rang the bell furiously for the attendance of her woman, and, with a smile of ineffable rage and disdain, rushed out of the room.

"My father's sister!" said Felicia, in a low voice, as she followed her retreating figure. "May she never, never want those tender attentions I would joy to give her!"

CHAP. XXIII.

"Can earthly blessings ever beam
On my lone heart a brighter gleam?
Ah, no! for all my earthly trust
Is buried in the silent dust."

It was at the still solemn hour of twilight that Felicia rose from her sleepless couch, and silently directed her steps to the apartment of Jenny. She was fast locked in slumber.

"Jenny," she said, as she bent over her, "I am going to leave this house for ever." Jenny started as from a trance. "I do not urge you to go with me, for mine will be in future a life of obscurity. Lady Wyedale has recently shown you some preference, and I have no doubt will permit you to remain in her establishment."

"Oh, I will never, never stay, not a minute after you are gone," said she, jumping out of bed. "I will turn my hand to aught, and nothing shall come amiss to me, only let me go with you."

"I hope I may be able to reward your fidelity," she said, with emotion. Jenny assured her, and with truth, she wanted nothing but to be near her; and, after briefly hinting that she had had a misunderstanding with Lady Wyedale, Felicia desired her to pack up her clothes, and call a coach with as much expedition as possible. She then returned to her own apartment, awoke her little companion, and, after dressing her, was soon in readiness to leave the mansion of her aunt.

There had been in Lady Wyedale's manner, even more than her words, a cool determined implacability, that assured her any further attempt to shake her resolution, or soften her resentment, would be vain; and when she reflected on the cruel insults she had received, Felicia felt she could never view her again with even those negative sentiments of regard she had once entertained for her. Under these circumstances their separation was probably desirable. She had submitted to unparalleled treatment in the hope that she might have been of service to Rosalind and her deserted child; that hope was now dissipated; each succeeding day seemed to strengthen Lady Wyedale's abhorrence to the names of Rosalind and Evanmore. Her own wants were so few, it mattered little whether she were the favoured daughter of affluence, riding in a gilded chariot, or a humble pedestrian in the vale of middle life; and, though she still regretted that all intercourse between herself and so near a relative was destroyed, she soon learnt to regard this change in her situation with the calmness of Christian fortitude.

Jenny was by no means so much of a philosopher. She had, without hesitation, determined on sharing her mistress's fortune; but she deeply regretted this alteration in her destiny. Her pride and her affection equally revolted from seeing her dear young lady driven from the house she had so long believed would be her own. She took a sorrowful leave of her associates; and casting back a lingering look into the servants' hall, as she passed its wide portal for the last time, she could not help heaving, like the children of Israel, a sigh after the flesh pots of Egypt.

"Where am I to drive?" was the first question that conveyed a new chill to Felicia's heart. She was then a wanderer, without a home, going she knew not whither. But, quickly recovering her presence of mind, she directed the coachman to proceed towards Chiswick, and stop at the first neat-looking house that announced lodgings to let. The man nodded his head in assent, closed the door with an exclamation that it was "a desperate cold raw morning," blew his fingers without raising them to his greasy tattered hat, and, mounting his box, drove off.

Jenny's heart sunk within her. She had never before seen her mistress approached by an inferior without the most profound respect; and she felt the familiar nod, and the vulgar exclamation of the coachman, as so many attacks levelled at the consequence of each. Felicia noticed not these proofs of her degraded state. The heart, encompassed by real grief, is impenetrable to petty evils. She was, in fancy, arranging her little establishment, calculating her expenses, and reflecting with a feeling of a self-approbation, that threw over her darkened prospects a soft, calm, mournful light, like moonbeams gleaming on a still, sad lake, that she was indeed fulfilling her last promise to Evanmore. The coach, stopping at the door of a neat cottage, interrupted this reverie.

"You may go on, the like o' that will never do for my mistress, mun!" instantly caught her ear, in the well-known tones of Jenny's voice in a half passion. She looked out of the window, and saw a house, small, indeed, but wearing an appearance of comfort that immediately arrested her attention. Its green-painted windows, shining in the morning sun, and its confined garden in front, gay with the vivid colouring of flowers of unnumbered hues, struck her as indicative of cleanliness and industry in its possessor.

"Stop!" she cried, as the man, with a half-uttered growl at the familiarity of Jenny's reproof, was preparing to drive on. He willingly obeyed, and, opening the door, she sprang out.

The business was soon settled; the proprietor was a young widow, who had just lost her husband, and was desirous of eking out a limited income by letting a part of her house. As she mentioned the loss she had sustained, tears gushed from her eyes, and without a moment's further demur Felicia closed their agreement. She too had lost all she loved on earth; and, regarding her future acquaintance as a partner in adversity, whose burthen it was her duty to lighten, if in her power, she returned to the coach, which waited at the little garden gate, took Rosa in her arms, and announced that she should make no further inquiry.

Jenny felt exceedingly crest-fallen before the coachman; but, though Felicia's words and tones were always mild, there was a something in her manner which forbade the smallest remonstrance or appeal from her decisions; and she followed her without a comment into a little parlour, so neatly fitted up that she felt a portion of her chagrin abate. Their luggage was soon removed into the house, and, with a feeling of almost pleasure, Felicia took full possession of her new habitation.

These emotions were shared by little Rosa. She bounded round the garden, smelt at the flowers, and imitated the trilling of the birds. Her residence in Portman Square had been exceedingly irksome to her; for the dread lest any of the expressions of either infantile joy or sorrow might accelerate her removal, had made Felicia confine her so entirely to her own apartment, that she was beginning to feel excessively weary of her situation. She had all the life, spirit, energy, and activity of her mother, softened by the gentleness that so eminently distinguished her ill-fated father; and though at Felicia's bidding she would have remained motionless for an hour, she often lamented the loss of the "little nice garden behind papa's own house, where she used to run races with him round the grass-plat, all along the gravel-walk, and often beat." Of her father she frequently spoke, and her surprise that he never, never came to see her, was mingled with inquiries when he would be well. Rosalind was much seldomer the topic of her discourse. She sometimes mentioned her as "pretty mamma;" but she had seen so little of pretty mamma since she became capable of distin-

guishing, that remembrance of her seemed each day to become fainter.

Jenny was reconciled more slowly to the widow's humble mansion. She had become so much accustomed to a servants' hall, a host of fellow-servants, and the luxuries of a second table, that she felt a sensation like suffocation when she ate her plain meal in the little kitchen,—a feeling of desolateness when she sat down to work by herself in Felicia's apartment. Like many of her fellow-creatures, elevated above their former condition in life, she had forgotten the time when she inhabited the cottage of her father, and shared his slender weekly pittance with seven brothers and sisters. She became dejected, though never disrespectful; and Felicia, penetrating into this change in her disposition, immediately sought to remove it by gentle remonstrances and mild admonitions.

She reminded her of her former situation and present views; observed that she was now in a situation that would gradually prepare her for the still greater privations she must undergo as the wife of a young man whose fortune was yet to make, and whose station in society would never allow her to partake of those luxuries and pleasures she had enjoyed under the roof of Lady Wyedale. "As his wife," she pursued, "you must necessarily pass many hours entirely alone: you must live yet plainer, and work much harder; for years must elapse before you would, I should hope, think of taking a servant even if successful in the world. But if you now fortify your mind to bear these little hardships, they will not appear such. Rich in the love of a good man, and the consciousness of doing your duty, the pleasures of evening will amply atone for the labours of the day. He will return with joy to his neat fireside, his cheerful wife; and you, in anticipating his appearance and providing for his comfort, will never spend one irksome hour during his absence. But this domestic happiness will never be yours if you marry, determined not to be contented without the luxuries you enjoyed as a single woman. No; if you cannot submit to these trifling diminutions of personal comfort, you must not marry. Relinquish your engagement at once, and endeavour to get a situation again in some affluent family."

Jenny listened to this remonstrance with the most profound attention, and a little secret displeasure. She felt ashamed of being thought selfish, unable to make the least sacrifice; and was by no means inclined to resign her lover. Still she knew it was well intended, and, with a low silent curtsy, she withdrew to analyse those feelings of depression which her young mistress had, she thought, a little harshly ascribed to so unpleasant a source. But, though hasty in her temper, Jenny possessed a strong, shrewd, ingenuous mind, and the result of an hour's reflection convinced her she could in no other way account for her want of spirits, than by tracing it to a diminution in her personal enjoyments.

She was living with the same mistress, had little more to do ; nothing had gone wrong between her and Mr. Samuel Burton. She was in good health, and, consequently, after all, it was as Felicia hinted ; she had indulged a little splenetic melancholy because she had been deprived of a few gratifications which exclusively belong to persons of wealth and their dependants. She blushed as she slowly admitted the truth of the mortifying charge which Felicia had indirectly preferred against her, and determined to show she could submit to be married by the cheerfulness of her future behaviour.

The change was observed by Felicia with a pleasure which more than repaid her for the uneasiness she had felt in witnessing her previous dejection. In defiance of this little blot, Jenny had lately become a greater favourite with her ; for she was so kind, so attentive to her young *protégée*, she deemed her an invaluable domestic on that account only ; and the struggle she had made before she could even bring herself to endure the child, rendered her present attachment more meritorious.

When first Felicia introduced the child into her aunt's establishment, Jenny contemplated her with intuitive dislike. Her knowledge of Lady Wyedale's character and Felicia's, made her anticipate that the child of Rosalind must prove a source of discord and strife between them — possibly ultimate separation. This alarm brought the delinquencies of both parents vividly to her memory ; and, like Lady Wyedale, she was of opinion ought to be visited upon their offspring ; or, at least, if she did not reason on the justice of such a sentence, she acted as if she did. In her dark, laughing eye she saw the mother's flirting spirit ; in her sweet smile and soft voice the father's hollow, coaxing ways. Felicia saw it would be vain to reason with her ; she had, therefore, recourse to another method to allay the animosity which she evidently thought she ought to feel against the child of persons who had used her mistress so ill. She employed her to teach her her letters ; frequently quitted the room with the remark of, "Jenny, I leave my dearest Rosa to your care : I am sure you will not abuse the trust ;" or, "Jenny, pray take the child into the parks ; I feel she is as safe with you as with me."

Besides the ambition to merit commendation and confidence, which is generally found in a well-disposed heart, there is in undeserved approbation a something from which it instinctively turns with secret confusion. Jenny was proud of this disguised praise, yet not quite sure it of right belonged to her. After hesitating whether she should avow her dislike, or try to overcome it, she quieted her scruples by determining faithfully to discharge the obligations thus intrusted to her, however disagreeable ; and, before a month had elapsed, began to smile at her little charge's comical sayings — be pleased with her growing attachment to herself, and astonished at her being so little like her mother. The instant her mind suggested this latter idea, Rosa mounted

so many steps in her regard, that she no longer felt the smallest remnant of former antipathy; and, after a few ineffectual efforts not to love Rosalind's child, she became convinced she could not help it, and that "the poor little thing, after all, wasn't to blame for what her father and mother did before she was born."

CHAP. XXIV.

"Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."
SHAKESPEARE.

"And thou, my earliest love—my latest care,
Where hidest thou thy black despair;
In what lone chamber dost thou seek
To screen thy guilty care-worn cheek?
Oh, come! and let me with thee share
The anguished hour—the broken prayer.
Though lost to all thy former charms,
I still could clasp thee in my arms,
If smothered sigh, or starting tear
Bespoke thee penitent, sincere."

FROM his visit to his brother, Mr. Berkely returned home more depressed in spirits than he had even before felt. Lady Wyedale's continued and pointed dislike to his attentions, together with Felicia's excessive dejection, operated to persuade him if she ever should accept his addresses, it could only be at some very distant period. At such a moment, too, he thought it would be equally indelicate and dangerous to his cause to solicit her hand; and, influenced by these considerations, not as Felicia imagined by a reluctance to unite himself to the sister of a woman who had forfeited her honour, he returned to the Grove without making the avowal which had so often risen to his lips. Still he thought that Felicia did not regard him with total indifference, and he was resolved to make another effort to see her, when in a letter to Miss Berkely she mentioned having adopted her little niece. He felt staggered—had Mr. Evanmore no other relation to whose care the child might have been consigned?—was it not going farther than was necessary in the path of sisterly duty? These and many other conjectures equally unpleasant, detained him till a few weeks after she left Lady Wyedale. Time had then effaced the force of these surmises, while his attachment gained strength; and, determined to know his fate, he reached Portman Square. He rapped, with a beating heart, at the door, and, all the lover in his voice, stammered out an inquiry for Miss Leycester.

"Miss Leycester! she don't live here," was the answer. Berkely felt an instant's surprise; but, supposing he had mistaken the house, was turning away, when the livery again arrested his steps.

"Lady Wyedale lives here?"

"Yes, sir."

"And Miss Leycester!"

"No, sir, she has left my lady some time."

Mr. Berkely started. "Where is she?" he asked, in a voice of blended astonishment and concern.

"I don't know, sir;" and, turning on his heel, he prepared to shut the door.

"I must see Lady Wyedale!" said Mr. Berkely, hastily preventing his intention. "I must see her directly." The man said something about her ladyship's not being at home, but Berkely heeded it not; he pushed by him, and bounded up the stairs. The drawing-room door was open, and, forgetful of all ceremony in his anxiety to learn Felicia's residence, and the reason of this strange alteration in her situation, he introduced himself.

Lady Wyedale received him with a look of undisguised displeasure; but regardless of her indignation, after a hurried apology for his intrusion, he requested to be informed where he could meet with Miss Leycester.

The floodgates of Lady Wyedale's resentment and grief were now opened. She had fancied he came to remonstrate with her on her behaviour to Felicia and her little niece; and, delighted to find he was in ignorance of the whole business, she poured out the long catalogue of Felicia's sins and her own injuries.

Mr. Berkely listened with the cold chill of almost despair. He made every allowance for her ladyship's manner of relating the story; but divested of all embellishment, the facts themselves were terrific to his feelings as a lover. The child of Evanmore was her idolatry—lived with her—slept with her. She had broken through the ties of duty and gratitude, relinquished the fortune and countenance of her aunt, and abandoned her in the decline of life, with decaying health, that she might devote herself to the child of her former lover. That this child was also the deserted infant of her *only sister*, scarcely once occurred to soothe the tumult of his feelings. Indeed, it was a circumstance so carefully kept out of Lady Wyedale's narrative, that it was not very strange he overlooked it. The little Rosalind might have sprung like Minerva from her father's head. "*The child of Mr. Evanmore! Mr. Evanmore's child!*" were sentences so perpetually obtruded on his ear during Lady Wyedale's recital, that, in the anxiety and surprise of the moment, he forgot this material justification of the step she had taken. In a paroxysm of wounded affection and disappointment, he threw on the table the letters he had brought from his sister; and with a hardly intelligible request that they might be forwarded to Miss Leycester's lodgings, left the house determined to think of her no more. "Yes, however great the sacrifice—however painful the struggle—he would tear her from his heart. He loved her; but he

would never unite his fate to a woman who had, notwithstanding her outward prudence, evidently cherished a secret attachment to the husband of her sister."

In increased attention to every former occupation, he tried to banish her remembrance. Yet, still her mild features and sweet voice were ever present to his eye and ear; and he waited with a degree of impatience, which he could not repress, for her replies to the letters he had left with Lady Wyedale. They might contain some explanation of her motives—some apology for this departure from her accustomed propriety of behaviour. No such apology however arrived; Felicia continued silent; and interpreting her seeming neglect of his family into a confirmation of his apprehensions, he began with the sincerest emotions of regret to consider her as indeed lost to him.

While such were the sentiments and feelings of Mr. Berkely, Felicia, still the inhabitant of her humble lodgings, reflected on the length of time which had elapsed since she wrote to his family, with little less uneasiness. The letters he had intrusted to the care of Lady Wyedale never reached her hands; for, though she had written a few respectful lines stating where she was residing, when she sent for her books, and some other trifles she had been unable to remove at the time she left Portman Square, her ladyship affected not to know exactly where she was. She had no desire to promote any intercourse between them, and, as she had thrown the note into the fire the moment after having perused it, tried to persuade herself she was in ignorance of her direction. Something swam in her head about lodgings at Chiswick, with a widow; but she did not choose to task her memory to particularise this vague, indistinct remembrance. At length, when some months had rolled away, Felicia resigned all hope of receiving any reply to the letter she had addressed to Miss Berkely, stating that she had become the protectress of her infant niece: while a remote suspicion, that the Berkelys disapproved of her conduct, sometimes arose like a dark cloud over the dawning happiness she began to feel in the society of her sportive companion.

In defiance of her wish to disguise the truth on this subject from her mind, the idea that she had awakened attachment in Mr. Berkely's bosom was once an agreeable one; though she implicitly believed she should have rejected him had he offered her his hand, and tried to persuade herself that she deplored the uneasiness his unrequited passion must cost him. But Felicia was a mere woman; and there is in the consciousness of being beloved by those who possess our esteem and respect, a something so gratifying to the best feelings of the heart, a pleasure so pure, so disinterested, so elevating, that it may be questioned whether it is not entirely free from that base mixture of motives and passions by which even the best among us are too often actuated.

Now, when adverse circumstances had destroyed every proba-

bility of his addressing her, she became more sensible of the nature of her feelings towards him, and not quite so sure she should have repulsed his affection. But she always tried to conquer such reflections, and only permitted herself to lament the loss of their friendship, and that Mr. Berkely should think she had probably been precipitate, imprudent. She could, however, only deplore that she had been placed in such a situation; she must either resign the protection of her aunt, or break her solemn promise to a dying father—that father the husband of her sister, her—oh, what had he not been to her! Nor were these the only regrets that darkened her lonely hours: the fears she ever secretly entertained that Lord Edgermond would never make a wife of her, now covered with shame and dishonour, whom he had rejected in her days of innocence, had been almost confirmed ere she left Lady Wyedale's; and she had subsequently learnt, in hints, that the shaft was envenomed by the desertion of her destroyer. Felicia felt that she ought to rejoice at this termination of their connection, since she could no longer hope for even that inadequate reparation, which was all he could make after such an injury. Yet it gave her another pang: Rosalind deserted—Rosalind abandoned—cast off as a vile incumbrance by him who had thus robbed her of that which makes life valuable! Oh, it was agony to think of Rosalind as an outcast, from even him for whom she had sacrificed her blooming charms—her youthful innocence! To these painful images succeeded a picture still more fraught with anguish—it was, Rosalind languishing in obscurity, perhaps even wanting the common necessities of life. "No, it could not be—even Lord Edgermond could not consign to such abject misery the wretched victim of his arts and her own vanity. He had doubtless settled a large income upon her; he might not have chosen to wed infamy to even his own depraved bosom, or relinquish his engagement to the amiable Lady Charlotte, but he had doubtless secured her all those luxuries to which she had been accustomed from her birth." But while she tried to allay her alarms on this subject, the image of Rosalind in more than mental misery haunted her; and after many weeks of intense meditation and conflictive feelings, she determined to write, a note to Lord Edgermond to solicit her address.

To address him,—to ask a favour, though such a favour, of him,—was, indeed, an exercise of fortitude. But the desire of learning some intelligence respecting her, the dread of her being in distress, surmounted every other consideration; and with a recoiling, sickening heart, she wrote a few lines entreating to know the fate of her sister. She knew that those who have a petition to prefer, must not give way to their feelings, however justly wounded, and she uttered no complaint, breathed no censure; she simply inquired where she was now residing, or had resided when he heard of her last. "To this letter he will not refuse an answer," she thought: nor was she mistaken. A few days brought an

answer. It was couched in those terms of involuntary respect which even a libertine can seldom avoid applying to a woman he knows to be virtuous; but it contained no information to atone for the self-control she had exercised in addressing him. The last time he saw her sister she was living in Venice—the fictitious name by which she was distinguished, together with the place of abode, were subjoined. He did not state the precise period when they parted; but from the length of time he had been in England, she could not help fearing Rosalind might have left Venice. She, however, wrote without delay, entreated she would remove her anxiety by stating her real situation and resources; communicated to her Evanmore's dying forgiveness, and informed her she was become the protector of her child. She knew Rosalind's temper too well to hazard the smallest reproach, the most distant allusion to her past crime, beyond that necessarily conveyed in Mr. Evanmore's message; and day after day she anxiously awaited a reply. None, however, arrived; and then, assured she had removed, she wrote to the persons at whose house she had resided, requesting, if she had left them, to know where she went.

To this letter she obtained an answer; but it was only to destroy every previous hope of ever learning where she hid her guilty head. She had quitted Venice many months; and they had not the smallest clue to her retreat. Felicia folded up this letter in silent sorrow: all hope of seeing again the sister she had loved—still loved so tenderly, fled—they had parted to meet no more, and all that now remained to her was the sacred legacy of her injured Evanmore. To the bitterness of her feelings under these successive blows, succeeded the hushed calmness of disappointment. She had gradually lost every friend, every tie that bound her to life, but one; and when, in the silence of evening (while the child, wearied with play, slept tranquilly), she contemplated its vicissitudes—its evanescent pleasures—its perishable passions—its petty pomps—its fading glories—the world vanished from before her; and her spirit looking back upon its cares—its joys—its allurements—its struggles—with astonishment and contempt, soared to those brighter regions whose dazzling lustre is impenetrable but to the eye of faith. But though such brilliant visions may sometimes illumine the gloom of a dark horizon, sometimes elevate the pious mind above the transitory afflictions of this chequered scene of our existence, they partake of the fleeting nature of all sublunary joys; and while a religious spirit will never lose the well-grounded hope which assures of future happiness, it cannot, nor should it, so far shake off mortality as to be entirely abstracted from its concerns. That she had not yet learnt to be indifferent to this world she was taught in the indisposition of little Rosalind, who caught the measles, and fears were entertained for her safety. Felicia had loved her fondly before; but her illness intertwined ten thousand new chains about

her heart. Again she felt that she would still endure a pang, great as almost any former one, should this last of love's links be torn away; and it was her daily care, her nightly prayer, that she might be spared to her. A fortnight had she watched by the side of the suffering child, and the dreaded crisis was fast approaching, when towards evening the little one suddenly fainted.

"Oh, she is dying!" cried Jenny, wringing her hands. "She is dying! Pretty, pretty creature, she is dying!"

Felicia scarcely breathed while she pressed her trembling hand on the child's little bosom to feel if life still throbbed in its heart. "She is not dead!" she cried, tears gushing from her eyes. She raised her eyes to heaven. "Oh, if it be Thy will," she murmured, "grant her to me!" The child opened its eyes—something like dawning intelligence beamed in their sunken glance, and she felt as if it were restored to her. Still she wished for immediate medical aid: the surgeon, who was in attendance, had not left them more than half an hour; and as he had then several other patients in the place, her landlady thought he might be found at some of their houses. She offered to go in search of him, but as some little time would elapse before she could be ready, and it was growing dusk, Felicia determined to seek him herself. She was always so neat that a few minutes sufficed to prepare her for her walk. Her inquiries were, however, for a long time fruitless: "he had been, but was gone;" still he might perhaps be found, and she pursued him till she came to a small house, situated in a dark, narrow court. The door was open, and, assured she had at length traced him, she rapped gently. No one answered the summons; and after repeating it two or three times she advanced into the room. Still no one appeared, and, supposing she was mistaken, she was on the point of returning home, when she thought she heard some little movement proceed from an adjoining apartment, the door of which was partly open—she stepped forward.

The room was small and shabbily furnished. A tent-bed stood at its farthest extremity; and a little deal table, on which lay some medicines, revealed that it was the abode of sickness. It was partially illuminated by the dying embers of an expiring fire, and the rays of a single candle beaming in the socket. Its fluctuating beams rested on the fragile person of a woman, who was reclining in a large old-fashioned chair supported by pillows. Her face was concealed by an arm of sickly whiteness, and a profusion of light shining hair which had escaped from beneath her cap. Her hand rested on the serene face of an infant reposing in the untroubled sweetness of childish slumbers, and the transparent thinness of the one mournfully contrasted with the rosy roundness of the other. Her head was bent on its dimpled features, and a tear trickling through the half-shut fingers of the young mother, betrayed the nature of her silent musings.

There is something sacred in that grief which utters no com-

plaint, which seems to shroud itself even from the sufferer, and Felicia involuntarily drew back, fearful of intruding on a sorrow so deep. But it was too late—her stealing footsteps caught the ear of a little dog sleeping by the fire, and his angry growl, as he fiercely sprung towards her, arrested the attention of the mourner. She suddenly raised her head, and threw back the dishevelled hair that shaded her face—the light fell full upon it, and discovered a countenance that, once seen, was destined never to be forgotten—for it was the countenance of Rosalind—

Felicia shrieked, and, springing forward, clasped her in her arms. "Rosalind!" she cried; but Rosalind spoke not. She anxiously bent her head to view again those features which fond affection had indelibly imprinted on her heart, and saw she was insensible to her love—the fluttering spirit seemed scared from its frail abode. She shrieked again and again, but no one came to her assistance. Rosalind was evidently its only inhabitant then within; and, trying to compose her agitation, she sought to recover her to animation.

"Rosalind!" she said, when the pallid lips and returning colour again partook of the hues of life. "Rosalind, dear, dear Rosalind!" she repeated. Rosalind feebly opened her sunken eyes, and looked wistfully at her. Oh, they spoke a language that thrilled through Felicia's soul.

"My Rosalind!—my dear Rosalind—speak to me!—Oh, speak to me!" was all her tremulous lips could utter as she pressed them a thousand times to the cold cheek of her dying sister.

Rosalind appeared again on the point of relapsing into insensibility: her poor thin arms seemed unable to sustain the weight of the babe which yet rested on them; and fearful of its falling Felicia eagerly caught it in her own. Rosalind suddenly seemed to acquire new energy. She half raised herself from her pillows, and reclaimed her child.

"You must not touch this child, Felicia," she said, in a voice hollow, yet struggling for firmness—"it is the child of shame!"

For a moment Felicia shrunk back, and gazed on her in speechless emotion—then strained both to her bosom.

"My own, own Rosalind!" she sobbed—she could not proceed; but she still grasped them tightly in her arms, and the proud heart of Rosalind was subdued. Burning tears rushed to her aching eyes—with a weak, piteous cry she flung her arms around her sister, and gave way to the bitter agony that swelled her bosom to suffocation.

CHAP. XXV.

" But woman
 In that dread forfeiture renounceth all !
 Shame — honour — kindred — offspring — and her right,
 Her birthright heritage of fair entreatment
 By all of sterner sex. A fallen woman
 Of all earth's abject things is still the basest ! " FLETCHER. "

PRIDE, indignation, ten thousand indefinite feelings may influence the mind to overcome the first assault of temptation, but virtue alone will enable it firmly to resist the secret inclination of the heart, strengthened by the insidious blandishments of the tempter. Every succeeding interview weakened the resentment Rosalind had at first felt against Lord Edgermond, and confirmed that secret prepossession in his favour which she had ever felt. The attack which Miss Beaumont had made on her character first roused her to a sense of her imprudence, and the next time she met him she determined to behave with so much distance, that their intimacy must gradually subside into mere acquaintance. But her resolution, like most other resolutions when unsupported by a stronger principle than mere attention to propriety, or the established customs of the world, was of transient duration. Her coldness neither escaped his notice nor remark. When raillery failed to remove it, he boldly adverted to what he justly esteemed the cause : " hoped she had too much *spirit* to suffer herself to be influenced by an atrocious, yet contemptible, libel, reflecting only on the authors, not the innocent objects of its malice. Surely it was very hard, that two persons who had known each other so many years were to be debarred from speaking with the unrestraint which necessarily attends long acquaintance ? For his own part he despised such paltry, assassin-like attacks, and would show his contempt for this, by behaving just as if he had never seen it."

The giddy Rosalind listened to these insidious observations, till she grew almost ashamed of the mortification she had previously felt, and, like Lord Edgermond, resolved to evince her superiority, by forgetting the lesson it taught her. At this dangerous period her disagreements with Evanmore daily assumed a more serious complexion; and from his painful remonstrances she turned, with increased disgust, to the fascinating society of Lord Edgermond. He was still a bachelor, for Lady Charlotte was in a delicate state of health; and till she should have attained her twenty-second year, it had never been intended that they should marry. Report, too, whispered that they had had some disagreements, which rendered their being ultimately united by no means certain. The cause of this perceptible coldness was unknown to all but themselves; the world, however,

did not scruple to assign his continued intercourse with Rosalind as the chief, if not only, source of dissension ; and Rosalind, vain, selfish, and imprudent, derived pleasure from its being supposed that she had power to shake such an engagement. She boasted a contrariety of feelings and pursuits, all opposite, yet readily amalgamating, and all in subservience to the master-key to her heart. She was faithful to her husband even in thought ; but she had learnt to regret her precipitate union, and to believe, that had she remained unmarried a few years longer, that point to which Lord Edgermond had so often alluded might have been accomplished. Lady Charlotte, worn out by palpable indifference and a protracted engagement, might have voluntarily resigned her claims to his hand, and left him free to offer it to herself.

Such were her feelings and sentiments, when her careless imprudence put Evanmore in possession of that secret which it was so much her interest should never be revealed to him. Terrified at his violence, exasperated at the reproaches he poured out against her, she flew to the house of Lady Clinda Lovelace. Lord Edgermond was there when she entered. Her flushed face, hurried accents, and affected vivacity, told him the tale she vainly strove to conceal—the rest may be imagined. Led on by vanity, goaded by resentment, and fired by ambition, the dictates of her heart triumphed over the feeble voice of virtue, and she consented to forfeit, for ever, all that rendered her valuable in the eyes of her destroyer.

From Paris they proceeded to Venice, and had there resided some months when they learnt that Evanmore had obtained every reparation which the laws of his country could afford him. As every mortifying particular of her past folly and wickedness was thus brought more distinctly to her mental view, and as she was thus exposed to the aggravation, commentary, and sarcasm of the world, Rosalind became more anxious that Lord Edgermond should particularise those general promises he had made, that, when released from Mr. Evanmore, she should become his wife. Still, however, he forebore to mention any period for their union ; and high-spirited, generous, and confiding, she would have scorned to feel or to appear suspicious. Week after week thus glided away. Rosalind tried to believe she only wanted the title of wife to make her happy. But her rosy cheek faded—she lost, imperceptibly to herself, her usual light-hearted bearing—her voice its exhilarating tone. Felicia's sorrow—Lady Wydale's rage—Evanmore's revenge—her child's wonder that she returned not—the world's contempt, came fitfully to her thoughts, like the snatches of an old melancholy ditty to the memory ; and, though she strove to banish them, they would return, inflicting a sudden pang only to be soothed by Lord Edgermond's presence and caresses. And ever when he left her, something like regret,—it could not be called remorse,—at having abandoned her home, mingled with a feeling that could not be termed fear,—yet

bordered strangely on it,—that she would not soon again become a wife, fluttered round her heart.

"This must soon be decided," she thought. "Winter is fast coming on, and he will return to discharge his parliamentary duties: he must then make me his wife." Her marriage appeared the culminating point of her destiny. She believed Lady Wyedale's resentment would gradually succumb to a coronet—and Felicia's to sisterly love—when she should appeal to their distinctive passions—as Lady Edgermond.

Winter came—and with it Lord Edgermond began to talk of returning to England. He spoke of her accompanying him, but did not hint his wish to possess a legal claim to her obedience.

Rosalind felt an indescribable alarm steal over her. She had taken a fearful part in the eventful play of life. She had resigned the title of wife.—Was it possible she might never more possess it? Her heart grew cold as the dark surmise rose to her sickening fancy. She had read of such things in newspapers—heard of such things—talked of such things in parties and in ball-rooms; and a thousand times she had speculated on the probable result, with more apathy and indifference than when perusing the fictitious sorrows of a heroine of romance. The barbed shaft was now come home to her own bosom—she felt its sting—she was doomed to feel it for ever.

She was expecting to become a mother, and she had once contemplated her situation with delight, as a further tie on the love and honour of her betrayer; but, she scarcely knew why, she became more terrified, and she determined to state, that she could never re-visit England till he had given her a right to his protection. It was a painful topic to introduce. Many times she tried to begin the subject, but as often her courage failed her. Her pride, too, revolted from what seemed to be an abject solicitation for that which he ought spontaneously to have offered. She remembered, with blended emotions of shame and grief, the wide alteration which had been effected in her situation since she forfeited her innocence. She contrasted the present period with that which had seen her on the eve of her marriage with Evanmore; his devoted attentions—the pride with which he contemplated the time that would make her his own; and again, a deeper sensation of regret, at having sacrificed a husband's love—a husband's home—thrilled through her bosom.

A packet from England ended this state of incertitude and misery. It contained, among many others, a letter from his uncle. He opened it with an interest that struck a dagger into her heart, and, turning from her, saw a few lines that instantly arrested his every feeling.

In language which ill concealed poignant regret and disappointed affection, Lord Wilborton announced, that Lady Charlotte Edgermond's decisive rejection of his hand left him free to offer it to her on whom honour required that it should now be

bestowed. While Lady Charlotte, he said, "could flatter herself, that the attentions he had so long been paying to the companion of his flight were only those of common-place gallantry, however mortifying to her pride and her love, she had passed them over; but the final blow was now struck, and, whatever it might cost her, she was determined to renounce him—solemnly renounce him—for ever."

To this communication, the lingering attachment of those who had long and sincerely loved him added an entreaty, that he would, by his future conduct, endeavour to remove the stain he had thus thrown on a long line of illustrious ancestors; and seek to rescue his polluted name from further obloquy, by uniting himself to her who had relinquished, for his sake, all that is most precious to woman;—that he would remember he was living at a period when lawless anarchy would wish to level the distinctions of rank and virtue, and to tear down the judicious marks which, in past ages, were erected, to ennoble the great and good, and give permanence to esteem—that he was placed in a situation where one part of the world regarded him with a jealous and invidious eye, while the other looked up to him for an example.

A farewell, whose tremulous characters betrayed how truly he was yet loved—how deeply his conduct was mourned, concluded a letter, in which affection, struggling with a sense of injury, and the pride of a noble mind contending for mastery over a heart that recoiled from casting off one dear, though degraded, was visible in every hurried sentence.

He stood motionless, and twice he read this letter with an agitation he neither could nor attempted to disguise. His general estimation, in society, he knew, had hitherto been concealed from his cousin, for she had neither friend sufficiently sincere, nor enemy sufficiently malignant, to warn or wound her mind by revealing it; and he had expected resentment, reproaches, and alienation for a time; but that his uncle and Lady Charlotte could really abandon him, had never yet occurred to blacken his anticipations. "No, it could not be! he was sure they could not wholly renounce him—he was a son to Lord Wilberton: and his cousin—she lived but for him—loved him with an ardour that made such a step impossible! How often had she palliated his errors to his uncle, refused to believe aught to his disadvantage, and pardoned, from the excess of her attachment, those slights—that indifference to her wishes and feelings—which he knew, he felt, were unpardonable." He again perused this death-blow to his happiness—to the expectation he had so long cherished of forming an honourable, advantageous alliance. There was a something that chilled each rising hope. A striking mixture of tenderness and resolution, of severe calmness and evident anguish ran through it, which, combined with the information that his letters and portrait were all sent back to his house in town, spoke volumes. They had cast him off, but he felt he

could not thus cast off his early affections—he was now rejected by him whose kindness had supplied the place of paternal love, by her whose heart he knew was still his own, though her spotless soul revolted from giving him that hand she had at length been reluctantly compelled to perceive he did not deserve.

An exclamation of grief and resentment burst from his lips as these reflections crowded to his imagination; and, careless what he did, so that he escaped from her who had contributed to this disappointment, he rushed out of the room, and flew to his own, there to prepare for his immediate departure.

He had been affianced to Lady Charlotte Edgermond almost from childhood; and, though he could not be said to love her, he had ever contemplated their union with great complacency till he saw Rosalind. Her transcendent beauty, life, and spirit, instantly attracted his admiration: he soon perceived he was an object of regard to this lovely creature, and once or twice he half wished his engagement to Lady Charlotte could be dissolved. But these feelings never found an abiding place in his bosom, when in her society. She did not possess the beauty of her rival, yet her manners were so soft and feminine, her character so exemplary, he could not help respecting her; and though he persisted in flirting with Rosalind, when separated from her during the winter months, which she always spent with her uncle in the country, he considered her as his wife whenever he thought seriously on the subject. But a neutral state is seldom long preserved in such affairs; and as his attentions to Rosalind gradually became more pointed, more particular, Lady Charlotte at length took the alarm; and to allay her just displeasure, he promised to discontinue his intimacy with her altogether. When, however, they again met, and her situation as a married woman equally forbad her hopes, and Lady Charlotte's fears, he took some pains to unite the cord he had so rudely snapped. He was gratified by perceiving his secret ascendancy over her, and vain of the attentions of such a woman. Like herself, he was no mean proficient in the art of coquetry: "flirting was, after all, a mere milk-and-water amusement; and if *she*, under such circumstances, chose to laugh and chat with him, he did not know that he could reasonably be called upon to decline the pleasure from any fastidious scrupulous fear of injuring her in the estimation of a *coterie* of prudes and scandal-mongers."

Certain that Lady Charlotte had now no cause for resentment, he listened to her remonstrances on the failure of his promise with nonchalance or indignation, and a slight misunderstanding had existed between them some time, when Miss Beaumont's paragraph met his eyes. He had never contemplated Rosalind's ruin—never thought of doing more than amuse himself with her as a beautiful, volatile woman, but a sudden revolution was, as by magic, effected in his feelings. "Did the world really anticipate such a result from their intercourse—had her conduct been such

as to authorise a suspicion that she would sacrifice for him her husband—her home? Was she indeed attainable?" Lady Charlotte vanished from before his eyes—he had no other tie to bind him to virtue, and taking advantage of her disagreement with her husband, he sought and won her.

But the dominion of violent passion is always fleeting and insecure—the season of guilty happiness short and precarious. There can be no real pleasure in any pursuit which the heart does not approve, and which tends to sink in our estimation the object of our attachment—no felicity in an engagement with one who has lost our confidence. Admiration may be kept alive by beauty, but love can be preserved only by esteem! The very effort to conceal from each other their secret contempt and wretchedness grows burdensome, and they who have thus made shipwreck of fair fame soon discover that the empire of unhalloed joy is neither firm nor lasting—that they have forfeited their honour without gaining happiness by the sacrifice.

In a few weeks his lordship was roused from the delirium of pleasure he had felt at his success, and was beginning to indulge in no agreeable speculations as to the termination of the affair, when Lord Wilberton's letter decided his growing apprehensions. But it produced no other feelings than those of rage—of mortification. The imprudent victim to his arts, and her own vanity, had lost with her virtue half her charms even in his eyes. Lady Charlotte, pure and heroic, acquired more than her lost power over his heart: he admired the conduct which he deplored, and he cursed the hour which had crowned his pursuit. Yet he did not censure the passions which had led to their mutual ruin, nor was inclined to make any reparation for an injury which he ascribed to Rosalind's own unguarded folly in the outset;—much less that proposed by his exemplary relative.

Lord Edgermond had no idea of virtue in man; but vice in woman he contemplated with that loathing abhorrence—that unbending, stern severity which is so commonly the accompaniment of libertine principles. He was determined not to place his honour in the hands of a woman who treacherously resigned that of another, and recoiled, with feelings of disgust, from an everlasting engagement with one who had voluntarily resigned the inestimable gem which could alone give her interest in his eyes, after her loveliness no longer possessed the attraction of novelty.

"What prudent man would dare to make her the depository of his peace, who failed to protect that of another? What tie can bind you?" were the cutting questions Lord Edgermond addressed to the agonised Rosalind, when, driven to desperation by the certainty of having lost Lady Charlotte, and goaded to madness by her reproaches, on avowing that he would never give her a legal claim to his hand, she poured out the bitterness of her spirit.

Rosalind heard no more. She had long found herself on the

verge of a precipice—she suddenly felt precipitated from its dizzy height, to an abyss, deep, dreadful, unfathomable—and existence became a blank.

When she first awoke to consciousness, she perceived a sealed packet lying on the table directed to her in Lord Edgermond's hand. She tore it open, and found a few farewell lines, accompanied by a bill for one thousand pounds. With frenzied violence she dashed it on the ground, trampled upon it, and then again lost all recollection of the terrible events of the day.

To these paroxysms of rage and despair, succeeded bursts of grief and shame. She inclosed his detested present with shuddering fingers in a blank cover, and, careless what became of her, returned to England. London, the home of the outcast, who has no other wherein to hide his head, became the residence of the fallen Rosalind; and the first information that met the wretched wanderer, was, the death of Evanmore by the hand of Lord Edgermond. Remorse, dark and direful, now possessed her soul. She took lodgings in a sequestered street, and there became the mother of a child, whose father she regarded with abhorrence.

For some days she refused to see it. A variety of passions preyed at once on a spirit, all of whose feelings were as acute as they were undisciplined; and burying her face in the bed-clothes, she gloomily wished the last wish of the unfortunate, that life itself might close. Fearful to what extent her anguish might drive her, the nurse, in defiance of her commands, brought the infant into the room, and placed it by her side. Its feeble moans reached her heart—the tide of nature returned—with piercing cries she flung back the clothes, and pressed with convulsive emotion to her bosom, the poor unhappy babe baptized in its mother's tears—unhallowed by its parents' blessing—unsanctioned by its father's name.

When all smiles upon us, we find no difficulty in suppressing the whisperings of conscience, or in stifling reflection in the sparkling bowl of pleasure. But on the couch of sickness, in the lonely chamber of misery and disgrace, we vainly try to shun its awful warnings. Rosalind was now unable to escape the voice she had so often hushed in dissipation; and remorse, if not penitence, haunted her dreary dwelling. The unrequited tenderness of him whom she had deserted—of him whom her guilty paramour had consigned to an early grave, arose in judgment against her; and, her mind weakened by suffering and solitude, in every passing breeze she fancied she heard his reproaching accents, in every indistinct shadow beheld his bleeding form. With the cold chill of horror, she would turn from these terrific visions to the remembrance of Lady Charlotte Edgermond. Neglected and deceived, she could now pity the anguish she had once delighted to inflict on her. She recollected the ungenerous pleasure she experienced at the idea of supplanting her—the dishonourable efforts she had made to deprive her of him to whom she had

been engaged from her childhood. These pangs of self-reproach were heightened by contrasting her conduct with that of ~~her~~ she had injured. In the tumult of his feelings at Lady Charlotte's decisive rejection of his hand, and the hurry of his escape during Rosalind's insensibility, Lord Edgermond left behind him his uncle's letter. Frantic with rage, and half hoping to find his desertion had originated from his family, she had torn it open; and the noble, dignified, generous, virtuous behaviour of her illustrious rival, planted an additional dagger in her heart.

Under the deep humiliation produced by these reflections, she learnt to think even Lord Edgermond's reproach, though its recollection pierced her soul almost to madness, not undeserved. "What pledge could she give of her constancy to him, who had violated the trust reposed in her by a husband? What assurance could she offer, or he receive, that her fickle heart might not have owned the dominion of some other attachment when time should have destroyed the charm of variety? What—what tie, indeed, *could bind her* to future virtue, who had already unblushingly relinquished her honour to a vile seducer!"

But the stings of guilt, of disappointment, of shame, were not the only evils she was soon doomed to experience. The splendid ornaments she had worn on the night of her elopement, were all that now remained to supply the wants of humanity: and Rosalind, the gay—the thoughtless Rosalind—nursed in the lap of affluence—she who had a few short months before despised the comforts of her husband's home—spurned at the bare idea of moderation, was reduced to the hard task of selling the glittering baubles which had so often adorned her lovely form. She felt convinced she should not survive the moment of offering them for sale; and as she wetted the cheek of her infant with a tear of heart-rending misery, she fancied it would be the last she should ever imprint on its unconscious face.

But though some dreadful stroke may part the spirit from its suffering companion, the hand of grief seldom inflicts a sudden blow; and Rosalind lived over this bitter moment.

As she turned from the counter where she had left these last mementos of her former state, the shop-door opened, and Jenny, with the child she had deserted in her arms, entered. She pressed her hands over the thick veil that enveloped her features, and tried to leave the shop. But her steps were so tottering, she feared to proceed, lest her fainting should reveal her to the keen eyes of the scrutinizing Jenny. She soon perceived she had no reason to fear detection, and the pleasure she felt in making this discovery was followed by a sensation of misery, deep and piercing.

The shop was a sort of bazaar, containing a variety of different articles—they came, it appeared, to purchase a trifling toy; and Jenny's loquacity speedily revealed, that it was to be a present from herself.

"I should like that," said the child, turning with indifference from the variety of trifles Jenny and the shopman severally pressed on her attention, pointing, with her little finger to a gilded coach drawn by six white horses, with most imposing tails and manes.

"Oh, but Miss Rosa must not think of that," said Jenny; "that can never be hers—was never intended for her—she *must* be contented with some of these."

The child instantly averted her eyes from the tempting object of her admiration, and catching up a little curly-headed dog, departed, apparently delighted with her acquisition.

"God bless her!" thought Rosalind, as she followed Jenny's tall, ungainly person, for the first time without ridicule, "God bless her! A few such lessons in my childhood, and I had not been what I am!"

That Felicia would never suffer her child to perish she had ever believed; but she was ignorant of her having been driven from Lady Wyedale's on her account; for, fearful of betraying herself by making any inquiries relative to her connections, she knew little more than that Evanmore was dead—had perished by the hand of Lord Edgermond.

Anxious to see where the child resided, she pursued them till they reached their humble home. Felicia, in deep mourning, met them at the gate; and, in a moment, her ready mind comprehended all—She fainted ere she reached her lodgings, and for some weeks was too ill to leave her room. She then determined on taking obscure apartments near those of Felicia. She would never make herself known, but it was a happiness to think she was near her.

When able to remove she hired a coach; and, after a fatiguing inspection of many different houses, finally pitched upon the cottage where Felicia found her. Its wretchedness and privacy, as well as its cheapness, were recommendations to her gloomy mind; and tortured by guilt, terrified by the approach of poverty, her miserable existence was fast wearing to a close, when Felicia once more met her dying sight.

CHAP. XXVI.

"*La Beauté sans Vertù est une fleur sans parfum.*"

"Can Beauty, blighted in an hour,
Find joy within her broken bower?"—LORD BYRON.

THE afflictions of the world, however severe, are frequently lightened by the hand of friendship—the consolations of hope; but those of guilt admit of no alleviation: they are ever present to the imagination—are cheered by no transient gleam of bright-

ness—no distant glimmering of happier days. For them there is no balm in Gilead—no hope, save that they may, in mercy, be blotted out of the awful register of Heaven.

Felicia wished to remove Rosalind from the dismal abode in which her life was fast ebbing away to her own. But Rosalind refused to quit it.

Indifference, or reconciliation to a state of infamy and disgrace, the last stage of the abandoned, was a depth of sin she had not reached. She abhorred herself. Guilty, yet not depraved, she contemplated, with loathing sensations of disgust, the exquisite form which had been the cause of her crimes, and turned with shame from the light of Heaven. Her present habitation was consonant to her feelings. A more agreeable residence would have been a scene of garish misery—could have reflected no ray of comfort on the dreary view within her. She felt a dismal satisfaction in seeing all around in unison with her darkened prospects. Her griefs required not the overcharging of fancy to render them more poignant; yet her lively imagination magnified her misfortunes, and brought, like a *camera obscura*, every dreadful particular of her past folly and iniquity more distinctly to her mental eye.

But there is a sort of sullen composure which arises from the cold serenity of a broken heart—a heart conscious it has drank the last dregs of the cup of affliction—felt the last shoot of earthly suffering; and to the wild ebullitions of frantic wretchedness succeeded the silent, settled calmness of a spirit hopeless—rayless—despairing. She made no complaints—shed no tears—even the attentions of Felicia seemed at times almost irksome; and with a languid or peevish monosyllable she usually repressed every attempt at conversation. Vain was each effort to rouse her from this torpor, to point her attention to another world; and, though after a hasty reply or impatient gesture, she always endeavoured, by a faint smile, or affectionate question, to evince her sense of her sister's kindness, she refused all consolation, and appeared to taste the only happiness of which she was now capable, when suffered to brood over her wrongs and her woes in dreary silence.

Felicia's spirits sometimes vanished with these ineffectual exertions to cheer the despondency of a broken heart—to illumine the dark path of the expiring soul. But she never relaxed in her silent secret endeavours till she saw they were becoming wearisome, when she would instantly desist; for she knew the moment for receiving such impressions is not that when the mind is soured by peevishness, or distracted by pain; and, seating herself quietly by her side, would try to forget all, but that she was sick, and in misery. But she fruitlessly sought to lose the remembrance of the past, and she wept as imagination portrayed her such as she was when they last met. The glow of hope tinting her blooming beauties—her brilliant eyes spark-

ling with vivacity—her laughing lips responsive only to joy—her open brow unclouded by a passing care—the look of radiance—the light ethereal step. How was she changed! Grief and Remorse had set their dark stamp upon her youthful countenance; her cheek was faded by anguish; her eyes sunk in despair; her brow contracted by anxiety and suspicion. The luxuriant hair, once decorated with the nicest art, hanging in broken disordered masses, shaded the colourless face and lips; the agile, graceful form, rounded by the hand of symmetry, bending forward in habitual dejection, and wasted till fond affection shrank from beholding a breathing skeleton. Still loveliness sat on the faded features, but it was a loveliness that rendered the ruin yet more affecting to the heart; and, when the contrast was too torturing for endurance, Felicia would fly to her home to recover that serenity which she vainly tried to retain.

“Poor mourner!” she murmured, when, worn out by suffering, she watched her as she slept the unquiet sleep of wretchedness, while her infant lay buried in tranquil slumbers in her arms, its cherub face resting on her aching bosom.

“Poor mourner, thy glory is past; thy sun is set! Once thou wast innocent as the lovely babe reposing in peace on thy lacerated breast—thy heart beat but to joy—thine eye saw only the bright visions of bliss—thy bosom swelled but to triumph; and, fearless of danger, thou proudly sailed down the stream of life. But thy course was short as glittering—a storm arose—a dark cloud overshadowed thy dawn—thou hadst no anchor of safety to preserve thee, and thy frail bark, tossed by the whirlwind of passions, was soon wrecked on the shores of infamy.”

Many weeks elapsed ere Felicia dared to communicate Evanmore's message. It was received with transports of agonized feeling that shook her feeble frame to dissolution.

There is in a last farewell, a something that silences all resentment—obliterates all offences—that mocks alike our fondest love and our direst hate. Evanmore, such as he was when first he sought her hand—when in the days of her innocence he hung on her words, proudly gazed on her beauty, rose fresh to her memory; and all the errors which imagination had tinged with the colouring of crimes, all the sophistries with which she had tried to believe he deserved her desertion, vanished from her mind. She saw not only the murdered, but the gentle Evanmore, stung to madness by his injuries; and she felt and appreciated that nobleness of temper which had blessed and forgiven his destroyer. For many hours she lay in a state of insensibility; and, when restored to reason, presented so ghastly a picture of guilt and remorse, that Felicia feared to contemplate those features so lately exulting in beauty, now distorted by despair and self-reproach. She had sometimes before tried to lead her thoughts to this subject; but, terrified at the excess of her emotion, she never again made

the most distant approach to it; and a week had passed, marked by more than usual dreariness, when the woman of the house hastily entered to say she was wanted. Felicia felt alarmed, but, trying to conquer her terror lest it might agitate Rosalind, she rose up, and, on leaving the room, met Jenny with a countenance of such mingled import, that at the first glance she could scarcely divine whether joy or sorrow was its predominant expression; but the second unequivocally announced that she was not only the bearer of no every-day intelligence, but struggling to overcome secret satisfaction.

"My Lady Wyedale has had a plectic fit," she said, before Felicia could inquire the cause of this summons: "the servants say as 'tis all over with her, poor saw! and the housekeeper is a-crying her eyes out. She'll not, perhaps, meet with such another place in a hurry; for it might so happen as those that step into my Lady Wyedale's shoes may not want her." Her cheek flushed—her eye sparkled, as she spoke; and at that moment every honour, every luxury, every advantage, appertaining to the situation of housekeeper was brought, as by magic, to her vision, and converged in the suite of apartments belonging to that important personage in the mansion of Lady Wyedale. "She has sent for you, ma'am, to come to tent her. I reckon by this time she has found out she can't get your like very easily. The servants knew very well where to find us, for I've always kept grate with them. I did not come forwards, ma'am," she continued, "for I thought that maybe—that—that—" she hesitated—and the proud consequential look and tone were subdued, "that the young lady might not wish to see me."

Felicia appreciated the delicacy of mind that prompted this consideration for Rosalind's feelings—the more to be admired, because she knew Jenny was one of those who did not quite enter into the spiritual meaning of not letting the right hand know of the deeds of the left. She would have liked for Rosalind to see how fond little missey was of her—how nicely she kept its clothes, and dressed its beautiful hair—how well behaved it was, and hear her repeat the two pretty hymns she had taught it during her aunt's late absence, "The Busy Bee," and "When'er I take my walks abroad." Whatever enmity towards Rosalind had till then lingered in her breast, was effaced when Felicia with sad tears communicated what, it was impossible to conceal from her, the meeting with her sister in a condition so humiliating; and she would have delighted to evince by her present respectful attentions and demeanour, her entire forgetfulness of the gibes and jeers which had once so annoyed her. But Felicia knew Rosalind's nature, and human nature too well, to sanction her visit, and she felt gratified that she had not taken advantage of this unexpected message from Lady Wyedale to obtain indirectly the interview she so much coveted.

On her return to Rosalind's apartment, to prepare for her walk to Portman Square, she found her in such a state of trembling

anxiety, that, apprehending she feared some misfortune had befallen her child, she hastened to remove it, by stating the real cause of her intended absence.

Rosalind listened in silence. The name of Lady Wyedale had never escaped her lips, nor had she alluded to her little Rosalind more than once, when in broken accents she thanked Felicia for her protection: yet, though she shed no tear, nor did she speak, she seemed restless and uneasy. "Felicia!" she at length cried, as Felicia rose to depart, "should she — you know who I mean —" her voice shook, and her features became fearfully wild and haggard, — "should she, when I am no more, consent to receive my Rosa under her roof, say, that I forbid it. Let her not, Felicia — let her not remain with that woman one hour alone. I was not born to dishonour. Once I had feelings kindly and prone to goodness as your own. Oh, had she instilled one virtuous precept into my infant mind, eradicated one vicious propensity, or taught me to subdue my wayward passions, I had not been the wretched — abject — infamous thing that I am!"

A loud cry of anguish burst from her quivering lips, and wringing her hands with the bitterness of despair, she buried her face in the pillows that supported her declining frame.

There were moods and moments when her despondence seemed to reach even *beyond* the grave, and Felicia, as she watched her eye sometimes half-raised as if in silent supplication to Heaven — then cast down with a wild and frantic emotion, as though hopeless of that mercy she wished to obtain, flattered herself that the fell pangs of remorse were gradually displacing by that life-giving grief which brings its own antidote, which heals while it seems to inflame, which pours its Heavenly balm into the wound for whose agonies there is no other medicine; but never had she seen in her ravings so much that seemed to show the heart was touched by contrition — that her compunction was the compunction of penitence; and glad tears trembling in her eyes, she said, "The child of my darling sister shall never be subjected to a temptation from which I can guard her."

Rosalind stretched out her thin arms, and taking Felicia's hand, kissed it fervently. As she fell back on her pillow, exhausted by this excitement, she touched the infant reposing by her — it opened a pair of starry eyes, and smiled. Oh! the smile of a baby! Rosalind's colour went and came as she looked upon the sweet little face. Felicia thought she divined the meaning of the long mournful gaze.

"I have for some time wished to beg that this pretty little thing, which I really think will grow up like me, should be sent away to join her sister. She wants air and exercise, and Rosa wants a playfellow." Rosalind looked wistfully in her face, every muscle quivering.

"Sister, dear sister!" cried Felicia, bending over her, "Rosa was given to me" — she sobbed — "will you give me this one

also, and the two I loved most on earth will be in some degree restored to me?"

With a feeble wailing moan Rosalind extended the babe—Felicia took it, and pressed it to her bosom. "This will be the dearest of the two," she whispered, "for it is your gift."

Rosalind answered only by sobs of mingled joy and grief. The babe born in misery, and once seen with abhorrence, had at length awakened a deeper interest in her bosom than that which first excited her maternal feelings. It had been her only companion during months of solitude and sorrow; and joint heir with her, to shame and misfortune, it seemed more allied to her—nearer—dearer.

"Hope and fear, the passions which linger longest in the breast, are extinguished by this crowning act of sisterly love and sisterly sacrifice," she at length murmured. "I knew you would never forsake this poor babe, but I dreaded her going into other hands—still scarcely dared to hope you would unite her to her sister under your own immediate protection. This weighed heavy on my soul when I felt my hours were numbered. I care not now how soon the account closes. I can die in peace with the knowledge that both my children will be spared what I have gone through. My Felicia, I once heard you say that, till the end of all things, none would ever know the extent of the good or evil they had done on earth. Oh Felicia"—her eye grew wild—her breathing difficult—"learn—even here—that your image—the remembrance of my sister—her alone—saved me in a frenzied moment of delirious wrong, and wrath, and agony from I—know not what—tremble to recal to memory—mad—mad—you came to me—I fancied you did——" She buried her face in her hands. There was a deathly silence—for Felicia could not speak. And in a few moments she resumed. "Yet in this, as in all else where our feelings have come in contact, I am selfish—selfish in desiring that you, an angel of purity, should be subjected to such a trial. Oh! what an aggravation of misery to see the ignominy which covers us, overshadow all that we love! To feel, when we go down into the grave, that no tears can be shed for us but those of shame—no sighs of regret, but that we had ever been!"

She covered her face, and wept with the acutest anguish.

"My Rosalind! how often must I repeat to you that they constitute my only hope of earthly happiness? But I hail such thoughts and tears as proofs of penitence."

Rosalind drew back. Pride, whose empire often survives amid the ruin, remorse, and shame he has effected, lingered over his prey. She could bear to speak of her crime; but the heart was not yet sufficiently softened to endure that it should be alluded to by another; and fearful of wounding where she meant to heal, Felicia left her to seek the abode of Lady Wyedale.

When she entered her Ladyship's apartment, she could not help contrasting its gaudy magnificence with the poverty that marked

the one she had just quitted. But the difference existed only in the rooms—the hand of death was equally imprinted on the features of their respective inhabitants.

“And thus it must be with us all,” she thought. “Death cannot be disguised—its features are the same in the monarch as in the beggar—its aspect as chill when enshrouded in purple and fine linen, as in the tattered chamber of human wretchedness.”

Lady Wyedale received her with a strange mixture of pleasure and hauteur, slightly alluded to her having been rather indisposed; and, without deigning to solicit her services, hinted that they would not be unacceptable.

Conscious that her necessary attentions to Rosalind would preclude the possibility of her devoting much time to Lady Wyedale, Felicia only generally observed she should be happy to pay her any little attention in her power.

Seemingly unsuspecting of her meaning, Lady Wyedale said, “You will come here before evening, I presume; and, as I suppose you are still bent on never parting from that child, you may bring her; only mind, I won’t be harassed by hearing her squalls all day long.”

This proposition rendering all evasion idle, Felicia avowed, that she had met with her sister, and that she was dying.

Lady Wyedale professed herself astonished at her intelligence, and yet more amazed at Felicia noticing such a creature; one who had destroyed her happiness, and disgraced all connected with her.

“Oh, dear aunt,” said Felicia, “if we would hope to be forgiven, must we not try to pardon? Shall we not turn an eye of pity on a soul humbled like hers to the very dust? She is mourning her crime even unto death—she will expiate her offence with her life. Man cannot ask more from his fellow worm!”

Lady Wyedale heard her with a cynical smile, and in that smile Felicia saw, that though the body was impaired, the mind remained unaltered by disease, unsoftened by the near approach of dissolution. Felicia replied only by a look of the liveliest compassion, and as she gazed on her earthy face, mourned the fate of a woman thus on the eve of quitting a world which had engaged her every thought, to enter one she had never allowed herself to contemplate.

For some minutes Lady Wyedale balanced between a desire to turn her a second time out of doors, and a wish to receive such attentions as she could conscientiously offer. She was really ill—had often experienced the want of her dutiful assiduities, and interest conquered pride.

As she had never been accustomed to spend the night with Rosalind, Felicia selected that season for her visits to Lady Wyedale, and four nights she had watched by her side when she became so much worse, that she resolved not to leave her in the

morning : she therefore despatched a note to Jenny, desiring she would inform Rosalind's landlady she could not see her that day.

Lady Wyedale appeared gratified by this voluntary attention, and Felicia seized the favourable moment, to entreat she would permit her to send for some clergyman.

Lady Wyedale seemed revived by this proposition to new vigour ; and with a haughty scowl, she requested she would not take such a liberty again.

"She was in no danger—all her medical attendants assured her she was not—she begged she might not be hurried by any methodistical cant or rant."

"My dear aunt," cried Felicia, "I wish, sincerely wish, they may not be mistaken ; but even, if my apprehensions are groundless, your illness will not be increased by receiving, from the lips of a clergyman, such advice and admonitions as are necessary to make us acquainted with our real situation—with the hopes or fears we ought to encourage ; and even the confession of our sins is an act of contrition which——"

Lady Wyedale interrupted this address, by assuring her, she was not conscious of having any sins to confess. "She had injured no one—had always done her duty, and more than her duty. She had never run away from her husband—she had never been the cause of murder—she had never contracted debts she was unable to liquidate—she had always set a good example to her fellow-creatures."

But though she strove to hide her feelings, it was evident to Felicia she had taken the alarm. She desired more physicians might be called in, and while she tried to maintain a dignified indifference of manner, she looked restless and uneasy.

Yet, though she was crossing the dark valley of the shadow of death without a gleam of light to illumine her dreary passage, the gloomy pass was not shrouded in horror. It was rather the unwillingness to leave this world than the fear of entering the next that clouded her rigid brow. She had, during a long life, so successfully banished every thought of eternity, and succeeded in persuading herself she had nothing to apprehend when the far-distant day should arrive, that the delusion still continued to wrap her senses in a fatal calm. Death was to her an unpleasing something which must be submitted to, not the messenger of a summoning God. She had always dismissed as quickly as possible every thought on the subject ; but when such reflections did occasionally obtrude themselves for a moment, she never doubted that she, like all the rest of her friends, should go to Heaven, when under the unfortunate necessity of leaving her handsome residence in Portman Square, and the other appendages of wealth and consequence which made the exchange appear so little inviting. She remembered she had usually attended some place of public worship once every Sunday, when nothing particular occurred to prevent her. Had always punctually discharged her

debts, generally given something when called upon for a subscription by persons of note, never transgressed the rules of decorum or broken the laws of her country. But the great pillar on which she rested her confidence of future felicity was, her kindness in protecting her nieces. How far she had been influenced by the consideration that they were the grand-children of a nobleman, never occurred to diminish the disinterested lustre of this act of benevolence. That the one had been made miserable by her harshness, and the other ruined by her pernicious indulgence, never gave her a moment's disquiet; nor did the recollection that both had been relentlessly driven from her roof—cast off for ever when they presumed to oppose her arbitrary will, appear to her the smallest tarnish on her claim to future reward. Thus satisfied with what she had done, it is not strange, that what she had *not* done never occurred to disturb her mind, or alarm her conscience.

As she watched the workings of her struggling soul—her impatient spirit—Felicia felt almost terrified. She had seen death before, but it was the death of the Christian—death was then robbed of its sting—the grave of its victory; and the dying object of her tenderness seemed to acquire new glory as she mounted to her native skies.

"Are there any hopes for my aunt?" said she, as she anxiously led her physician up stairs.

"None," replied he; "it is impossible she can live many days longer, or at least highly improbable."

"Oh, then, give her some hint of the awfulness of her situation!" said she, eagerly.

"I shall be thought very unfeeling," said he. "Medical men seldom volunteer such an unpleasant piece of information."

"Unfeeling!" cried she, laying her hand on his arm, "unfeeling! Oh, if death were extinction, it might be so; but when the enfranchised spirit only becomes more alive, more susceptible to happiness or misery by its separation from the body, is it not cruel to deprive it of those fleeting hours, perhaps minutes, which may enable it to make its peace with Heaven?"

He shrugged his shoulders, observed that it was all very true, and, encouraged by this hint, on finding his patient much worse, ventured to insinuate there might be danger.

Lady Wyedale changed colour; then, recovering herself, said, "Felicia, did you advise him to this step?"

Felicia would not deny that she had.

"I guessed as much. But I don't think I am so near death as you would wish to believe; and, if I am, I have not lived a worse life than my neighbours."

"Our responsibility is with ourselves," said Felicia, in a hesitating voice.

"Ah, I see your kind intention; but, though I am no methodist, I hope I may not be so bad as you good people are. always

willing to think your fellow-creatures; and, if I had not been shamefully neglected by those whose affection of peculiar sanctity renders their conduct less excusable, I do not think I should ever have been in this deplorable situation."

Felicia was too humane to remind her aunt at such a moment that she had been not only driven from her doors, but forbid to enter them as a visitor.

Lady Wyedale closed her eyes, as if inclined to sleep; and Felicia, fearful of disturbing the unquiet doze into which she soon fell, remained almost motionless, till she heard a faint groan; she flew to the bed—Lady Wyedale had experienced another stroke; and, though she lingered some hours longer, she never more opened her eyes on that world which had bounded her every desire.

CHAP. XXVII.

"Tho' yet but young, my bloom of life is gone!"

"Look on this pallid cheek, ye who have known
Its earlier brightness, and have smiling said,
That ye could wish transported to your own
The fresh suffusion of its healthful red.
Where is the eye's quick lustre? All is fled—
My heavy glance scarce brooks the blaze of day.
Where are the heart's warm answers? Chilled and dead
In my lone breast! And yet but short delay
Ere from these lips, perhaps, the last breath ebbs away.
There are few earthly feelings touch me now—
My soul is dark and barren ———."—BROOKER.

It is the conviction that the friend or relative who has left us is fled to brighter realms that can alone assuage the sorrow of our separation. Felicia did not love her aunt, but she deplored, with the truest grief, that she was thus snatched away in the midst of unsubstantial hopes and unchristianlike feelings. To the latest period of her illness she had appeared to retain all the malignancy of hatred—all the strong passions which had been her distinguishing characteristic. She knew that Rosalind was languishing on the bed of sickness, broken-hearted, and deserted by all but Felicia; yet she had never felt a ray of commiseration or a sentiment of forgiveness. She had, once or twice, indirectly tried to learn the extent of her misery; but Felicia saw it was with no desire of relieving it, and she never satisfied her curiosity.

The instant she had recovered from the shock of seeing Lady Wyedale die, Felicia sent for Mr. Leycester, and suggested that his father should be desired to visit London immediately. Mr. Leycester appeared extremely surprised: "would certainly do as she desired; but suggested that she had better search her ladyship's *escritoir* for her will—no doubt one would be found—it might render his father's journey unnecessary."

Though Felicia had not the smallest idea that anything would be bequeathed to her ; and, as it was most probable all might be left to Mr. James himself, she opened, in his presence, all her Ladyship's drawers and papers, ineffectually. No will — no memorandum appeared — no intimation of her last wishes, excepting a loose packet, containing some valuable jewels which she had worn on the night of the masquerade — the last time she had ever been full-dressed. They were simply marked in lead pencil, "for Rosalind — if she succeeds — then to be new set."

Mr. Leycester was "so surprised, he could not believe the evidence of his senses — could not yet help thinking a will would be found." As, however, he had long been her law-agent, and as none appeared, Felicia entertained a contrary opinion ; and, at her request, he despatched a letter to his father, requiring his immediate presence.

To Felicia this was no unexpected disappointment. She had long foreseen the triumph of the other branch of the Leycesters ; and had her Ladyship only slightly remembered her, she would have been quite satisfied with her division of the fortune. She remained in the house from motives of respect to so near a relative, till her uncle arrived, and then returned to her drooping sister to leave her no more.

A long and extremely well-written paragraph in the newspapers, stating — that after a life spent in the exercise of every virtue, and a long and painful indisposition, borne with exemplary fortitude, she had met death with Christian-like resignation — announced the gratitude of her brother for the rich atonement Lady Wyedale had, at length, made for years of past unkindness. But, though gratitude for her unlooked-for munificence made Mr. Leycester thus unmindful of her few claims to the eulogy he had bestowed on her character, he was not deficient in kindness of heart or generosity of disposition. One of his nieces he now pitied, and the other had his warmest respect : he, therefore, sent for Felicia, and after desiring she would give the jewels Lady Wyedale had once intended for her sister to her, he requested their acceptance of a thousand pounds each.

Felicia had nothing quixotic in her character, nor was her mind too delicate to bear the weight of an obligation. She thought her uncle, under such circumstances, could well afford to part with two thousand pounds, and to her the sum would be affluence : she therefore accepted his presents, with many expressions of affectionate gratitude ; and, after sincerely wishing him health and life to enjoy the fortune he had acquired, left him, to communicate the pleasing intelligence to Rosalind. She had hitherto forbore to mention that both were discarded by Lady Wyedale ; but her silence had confirmed Rosalind's fears, and given a new and deep blow to the heart already so lacerated. "Rosalind," she said, seating herself on the low humble bed,

when she returned, "you often regret that I should be subjected, by the adoption of my little nieces, to much care and expense."

"Yes, yes, sorely, sorely! It adds much to the weight of woe which is sinking me into the grave."

"Then learn that you have no need to lament it more."

"What can you mean?" she said, her sunken eye lighting up with the long-extinguished fire of former days. "Your brightened face should be the harbinger of gladness. What is its meaning? Has poor murdered Evanmore's property turned out better than expected? Speak, Felicia, I cannot brook suspense!"

"Do you remember, love, in your day of fancied prosperity, taking pity on poor uncle James, and taxing your girl's purse to give him a new handkerchief?"

"I think I do, now you remind me of it," she said, rubbing her brow. "Yes, very long ago—I had forgotten it."

"Rosalind, that unerring sign of a noble and generous nature has met its recompense. He remembers the young heart and hand that sprang forward towards him in his adversity, and he begs me to offer you a thousand pounds and my aunt's jewels, with much sympathy. He was obliged to go home, or he would have presented them himself, and on his return he will visit you, if you permit him, as your loving uncle; and to speak to you on many, many subjects, dearest. I too have received the gift of a thousand pounds, which I feel I owe to you, for my uncle never saw me before. Mine, therefore, belongs of right to one child—yours to the other; and thus, you see, that act of girlish goodness conferred independence at least on both your darlings."

Rosalind, who had listened in breathless silence, gradually raising herself upon her pillow, flung herself into Felicia's arms when she finished, unable to articulate for some minutes from intense emotion. "Angel! angel!" she cried at length, "as subtle and ingenious in suggesting sources of happiness, as *She* was in discovering where to wound."

Increased debility followed this exciting scene. Her affectionate anxiety on Felicia's account, removed in some degree by Mr. Leycester's liberality, she mentioned her children no more. She knew they were in safe keeping, but she sent Jenny a ring once belonging to her former lady Mrs. Beaucherc, in token of gratitude for her kindness to them. The feeble frame was evidently fast approaching its long home. The machine remained; but the identity was gone. Her eyes were become fearfully bright: there was something unearthly, yet unheavenly, in her appearance—beauty lingered, but it was a beauty that had ceased to please—it was the terrific beauty of the grave. She marked the change, and seemed to experience a gloomy happiness in perceiving she was drawing so near to the termination of her painful pilgrimage.

The days were now long and intensely hot. Rosalind felt the languor of declining strength increased by the closeness of her

situation; and again, but vainly, Felicia petitioned her to leave it. She continued to shun the light of day, and Felicia, at length, resigned the attempt to remove her as hopeless. She refused medical aid. "Who can minister to a mind diseased?" was her question to Felicia. All that affection could do was done to render the apartment less dreary. Whilst she slept, strips of carpet were spread over the dirty floor—fresh flowers bloomed daily around her—the shabby old chairs gave way one by one to newer, and a little pallet was placed by the side of her bed, on which her sister threw herself when weariness and watching overcame her own declining strength. These attentions did not escape her, and a languid smile, or look of love, often repaid them. Feverish and faint, she refused almost every species of nourishment, but that derived from fruit; and, anxious to anticipate her wants, Felicia, one evening, determined to walk to a neighbouring gardener, who had then some fine grapes on sale. Enervated by a constant residence in a sick apartment, and desirous of selecting the best she could procure, she resolved to be her own purchaser, and, taking a small basket in her hand, she commenced her walk.

It was a lovely sun-set, and its parting radiance tinted the surrounding landscape with gleams of golden lustre. A dazzling splendour rested on the tops of the distant hills, and threw a richly purple hue over their heathy banks. Scarcely a breath of air waved the leafy branches of the luxuriant trees, that sheltered the flowery lane she was traversing, or curled the little waves of a clear blue rill that murmured by the side of her path. Not a breeze ruffled the blushing petals of the wild roses that shed their fragrant perfume on the air—not a sound interrupted the stillness of evening, but the gushing of the stream that poured its babbling waters through this solitude. The cattle were reposing in the shade—the bees were gone to their straw-bound homes—the blackbird had forgotten its vesper melody—the kaw of the rook was hushed to silence; and, as she pursued her lonely walk, Felicia felt affected by the saintly repose around her.

"Oh, that Rosalind's mind partook of this calm serenity!" she thought; "yet let me not repine: who can tell the acuteness of her remorse—the deepness of her penitence—or who conceive the brightness of that scene which may open on the soul, which, like hers, has paid its crime with its life! Oh, may she be that sinner over whom even angels shall rejoice!"

As she continued these reflections, the long glowing train of light that illumined the horizon, faded into a grey stream of dingy lustre, and the balmy softness of the air changed into a close sultriness—a stillness which is often found to precede a thunderstorm. A few light fleecy transparent clouds sailed swiftly over the lowering vault of Heaven, and large broad drops of rain falling at intervals on the dusty road, impelled her to quicken her steps, that she might reach home before the tempest began to rage. Her efforts were ineffectual—the sky became

suddenly dark—a faint flash of lightning soon met her eyes, and a low peal of thunder murmuring through the heated atmosphere, announced it had already commenced. Again she hastened onwards; but she vainly tried to escape the heavy rain that soon fell in torrents, and deluged the parched ground. Her unshaken confidence in that protecting Power who suffers not even a sparrow to fall unnoticed to the earth, rendered her fearless of danger; but as the voice of the Deity, she listened to its tremendous reverberation with those solemn feelings it ought to inspire. The storm soon beat her defenceless form with pitiless fury; the thunder, at first muttering, now rolled on the ear in terrific percussion—sheets of pale-coloured flame, for a second, shed a flood of unearthly light over the darkened landscape, only to make the succeeding obscurity more awful. A shrill wind sprang up, and waved the branches of the trees already bowed down by the weight of the torrent across her path; while the birds, seemingly startled at the fearfulness of the scene, flew low and wildly around her, uttering short plaintive notes as in distress. Felicia felt her heart deeply impressed; and, with a sensation of dread, she was silently commending herself to Him whom the winds and waves obey, when, as she flew towards her humble habitation, which now appeared in sight, her eye caught the figure of a gentleman, contending, like herself, with the elements. "It could not be—no, it was impossible!" The stranger approached. "Yes—she was not mistaken—it was Mr. Berkely himself!" For a moment she drew back—then hastily advanced. She had no right to be offended at his apparent neglect, nor was he answerable for that of his family; and, with an embarrassed smile, she tried to say she was happy to see him. He replied with almost equal hesitation, and in silence they walked a few paces. Felicia felt distressed at her evident confusion, and, after some efforts, recovered sufficient presence of mind to mingle with her inquiries respecting his family, some regret that she had not heard from them in reply to her last letters.

"You—you are in their debt," said he, his eye anxiously fixed on her face.

"No, indeed!" she replied quickly.

"You never answered the letters I entrusted to Lady Wyedale!"

Felicia raised her eyes to his; they spoke a language that could not be misunderstood. She had never received them: he did not speak, but anxiously tried to screen her from the inclemency of the weather, and in silence they reached the little gate of her lowly dwelling.

"This—this is my humble habitation," said she, with assumed playfulness. "Will you condescend to take shelter in it from the storm?" He opened the gate, and Jenny, with a smile that distended her ample mouth two inches at least, ushered him into

the parlour, while Felicia stepped up stairs to change her dripping clothes.

Mr. Berkely surveyed the room with blended feelings of pity, love, and respect. Its walls were simply stained with green—its curtains were pure as the mountain snow—and all spoke neatness and harmony. A few flowers, a small collection of books, and some drawings by Rosalind and herself, were its only decorations. A volume of Sturm's *Reflections* peeped from among a host of small books; he took up one, and found it contained the redoubtable history of "The House that Jack built (a new edition), with many improvements in words of one syllable." He put it down with a sensation of mortification he could not repress. The loud laugh of infantile merriment struck upon his heart and ear—the door opened, and Felicia, leading by the hand a beautiful child, suddenly entered. She approached, and seemed to wish he should notice her; but Mr. Berkely recoiled from the little object of her tenderness, and placed her a chair without making those advances to intimacy with her young niece which she evidently desired.

"See, Mr. Berkely," said she, gently pushing the playful child towards him, seemingly unconscious of his ill-disguised coldness, "this is my little niece, the daughter of a most beloved sister, entrusted to my care by a heart-broken father. In his last moments he entreated me never to desert the helpless child he was so soon to leave, and in discharging the sacred obligations of such a bequest, I find myself beguiled of many a dreary hour. Another perhaps dearer still lies here," and cautiously removing a veil of transparent muslin thrown over a little cradle, he had not till then perceived, he saw a babe buried in tranquil sleep whose miniature features already promised to equal the beauty of her hapless mother's. "This is Rosalind's," she said, tears streaming over her face—"poor, dying Rosalind's."

Mr. Berkely looked earnestly in her face: the open brow—the unhesitating voice, announced that all within was peace and purity.

"How have I wronged you!" said he, after a pause.

"Wronged me!" said Felicia.

"Yes, wronged you!" repeated he, taking her hand with deep emotion

"Impossible—it is not in your nature to injure any one." Her hand rested in his as in that of a trusted brother—her smile was that of undisturbed confidence, and the folly, the injustice of his suspicions, crimsoned his face with a blush of shame.

"Yes, dear Felicia, I have, indeed, injured you. I had not a mind capable of appreciating the purity, the nobleness of yours; and I thought I believed—yes, I will confess my ungenerous suspicions, that lingering attachment to Evanmore prompted you to sacrifice all the world to succour his child."

Felicia involuntarily started, and attempted to withdraw her hand from his.

"Nay, dear Felicia," cried he, gently detaining it, "let me not be the only one to whom you can refuse forgiveness. I have, indeed, wronged you, but let a life of devoted attachment atone for my error. Oh, Felicia, long and ardently have I loved you! but I could not, could not endure to offer my heart to one whose liveliest affections were buried in the grave of her sister's husband. Still I sought you, for I was restless and miserable. Unwilling to apply to Mr. Leycester for your direction, lest it might betray the deepness of my interest, months have passed away since I commenced my anxious search; for, without allowing myself to see the absurdity and impropriety of seeking a woman I dared not permit myself to love, I yet panted for an interview. Heaven has granted my wishes, I will not call it chance; and say, dear Felicia, can you pardon my injustice, can you return my attachment? If years of unremitting attentions will, at length, give me a place in your heart, I will wait till you can say—I am yours. Then will I proudly claim you, then will I be a father to your little orphans. Yes, I will atone for my mean jealousy—my ungenerous conduct, and the child of poor Evanmore, with Rosalind's babe, shall lie in my bosom, and be unto me as daughters. Speak, dear Felicia, and say I have not forfeited that esteem which once I flattered myself you cherished for me!"

But Felicia was incapable of speaking: a thousand mingled images of bliss and sadness crowded to her heart, and the hand, resting with confiding security in his, alone betrayed that Mr. Berkely had no reason to despair.

CHAP. XXVIII.

"She was a form of life and light—
That seen—became a part of sight,
And rose—where'er I turned mine eye
The Morning-star of Memory."

LORD BYRON.

"We must not let our bridal happiness interrupt the melancholy stillness of my poor sister's expiring hours," said Felicia, when early the next morning Mr. Berkely came to renew his vows of attachment.

"Certainly not!" said he; but his face, contradicting the firmness of his words, looked irresolute and uneasy.

"The term of probation will be short," said Felicia, marking the expression of his features, while a deeper shade of sadness stole over her own. "It is impossible the despairing spirit can long inhabit its frail tenement. She has no one but me to depend upon—no hand will close with gentleness and pity her

dying eyes, if I desert her—desert her! Oh, Mr. Berkely, let not the confession lower me in your esteem; but she is dearer to me now, stretched on the bed of penitence and death, than, when arrayed in all the pride of youth and loveliness, every eye followed her with admiration. You know not how I loved her—for years I dwelt upon her remembrance with a fervor of attachment I can never, never feel again. We were orphans, and once clung to each other with an ardour that brooked not an instant's separation. Oh, how we wept when we were torn asunder. I was never doomed to feel the want of a mother's protection; but her unhappy destiny——”

Felicia paused: the arbiter of her earthly destiny was gone to give account of her stewardship, and Felicia shrunk with pious delicacy from casting a shade of obloquy on the memory of the dead.

“Urge me not on this point, cried she, placing her hand on his arm, her pleading face turned on his, in earnest entreaty, “I must not leave it to a stranger, to soothe the last moments of such a mourner—I must not leave it to strangers, to point the last hopes—to receive the last breath—of a sister!”

Mr. Berkely could not resist such a supplication; but, determined never more to leave her till he could call her his own, he took the lodgings he had formerly occupied near Chiswick, and sent for Miss Berkely to be his companion while his mother and sister prepared to remove from the Grove to a small but delightful residence within half a mile of its plantations.

It was Felicia's wish to conceal from Rosalind this happy change in her situation. She possessed that delicacy of feeling, that discriminating tact, which instantly suggests and guards against the possibility of inflicting a wound on the sensibility of others. To hear that she was on the point of becoming the wife of Mr. Berkely, she feared might awaken a long train of reflections that must be painful to her; and she cautiously abstained from alluding to him, till she fancied, from Rosalind's sometimes distant manner and restless uneasiness, she was already in possession of her secret.

Rosalind heard her with a sickly smile of pleasure; and when she mentioned that Mr. Berkely had voluntarily promised to consider her children as his own, a gleam of joy illumined her dim eyes with something of their former brilliancy.

“In your absence, the woman of the house told me you had a ‘sweetheart,’” said she, “and I knew it could be no other. I felt no uneasy fears as to the consequences of your union. I knew your promise would be held sacred through life; but I have felt grieved at your withholding the intelligence from me, because it appeared as if you feared it might give me pain; yet, O Felicia! if—I had lived—believe me, the spectacle of your happiness would have been my only source of consolation.”

Felicia replied only by tears and caresses. Hers was the

affection that clings yet more fondly to the dying object of its tenderness, and every hour seemed to wind fresh bonds of love around her heart. Yet she could have parted from her with joy, had she seen in her that depth of penitence — that strength of piety — which assures us that the exchange will be from suffering and sorrow to the brightness and bliss of eternal happiness. But though she now never refused to hear Felicia when she prayed or read to her, she did not join in those fervent aspirations which indicate a spirit under the influence of religious impressions. Still Felicia persevered; and those only who have known the bitter disappointment which attends the constant failure of constant attempts to awaken the dormant spirit — rouse the torpid mind to energy and feeling — those only, who have been exposed to the contagious depression of such scenes — listened to the muttering querulous voice — marked the despairing eye cast down in determined hopelessness — can be any judge of the merit of such perseverance.

"Alas!" she thought, as she watched the despairing features, the restless glance of the hollow eye, and heard the half-uttered moans of the tortured mind, "is this the gay and lovely being whose step was the bound of joy — whose heart heaved but with delight — whose proud spirit scorned the dominion of sorrow? Is it Rosalind thus smitten, thus subdued? Can it be the generous volatile Rosalind thus changed into the cold, silent, broken-hearted misanthrope? Yes, yes, the thoughtless hilarity of youth is not fortitude; and unless it be accompanied by those principles which teach us to regard this world, not as the bourn of our hopes, but the short passage to another of eternal duration, and instruct us to view its trials, griefs, and pains as so many guides to conduct us to brighter scenes, it must fade before the sorrows of life."

To this awful unknown world Rosalind was hastening with rapid pace. Felicia scarcely left her a moment. She relinquished her short daily walk to the children, and passed the long doleful night stretched by Rosalind's side, her arm supporting the aching head — her voice whispering to the aching heart of One who came on earth to bring back wanderers to His fold. They were again, as in infancy, all the world to each other. A faint "Bless you," or a feeble kiss imprinted on her hands or cheek, showed Rosalind's sense of this enduring love, but she seldom spoke — the weak weary body needed its last sleep — the throbbing heart, so lately torn by anguish, pride, and resentment, was already stilled by the chilling power of death. She had no visible malady — no cough — no impeded respiration — she was simply perishing from a broken heart — that sure but silent disease which continually carries away the sensitive and the sorrowful under other guises. The high hectic flush, which had succeeded to the rich deep healthful glow that once sat on her polished cheek, was displaced by a fixed unchanging whiteness; and the

eye, once radiant with the fire of youthful animation, was half closed by the drooping lid, now so shadowy—so thin—it scarcely seemed to shield the dim decaying orb from the light it abhorred. Yet there were moments when the spirit, like the last struggles of a dying taper, which gleams with a feeble, fluctuating light, then suddenly bursts into a resplendent flame till it vanishes for ever, seemed to acquire new powers, new energy; and, with starts of anguished feeling and impatience, she would conjure Felicia never to let Lord Edgermond know the fate of his child, or, if it were possible, the fate of her he had destroyed. As she approached the termination of her mortal existence, Felicia experienced another and a keener pang,—the suffering spirit sometimes wandered; and during these periods of slight delirium, she would revert to the scenes of their youth, fancy herself again the gay heiress of Lady Wyedale, the star of fashion and beauty; or, unconscious of Felicia's presence, would mourn for her as dead in those words she remembered she had once admired, now rendered doubly touching by the confused perception she seemed to entertain of her own fallen state, and the efforts this lost sister had made to preserve her. At these periods the low and mournful cadence in which she used to sing, or rather chant,

"I had not wander'd wild and wide;
With such an Angel for my guide;
Nor Heaven nor Earth, could then reprove me, }
If she had lived, and lived to love me,"

overpowered Felicia's fortitude. But it was seldom the vigorous mind long continued clouded. The tears Felicia sometimes shed—the involuntary shudder with which she listened to her sepulchral laugh, or marked the unnatural animation of her hollow eyes, frequently dispelled the illusion: and from these waking dreams she was always roused, when the remembrance of Evanmore or Lord Edgermond flashed on her senses. She would then utter a low, wild, plaintive shriek, and pressing her emaciated hands on her throbbing temples, burst into paroxysms of bitter tears and lamentations.

After Rosalind had been one evening more than commonly agitated, she dropped into a deep slumber; and while she mourned the strength of those feelings which seemed, even yet, to contend with the chilling influence of departing nature, Felicia watched by her side. She slept long—and the waning taper, the increasing gloom, scarcely permitted her to distinguish the fading form whose beauty would so soon be mingled with the dust—her who was so soon to say to "corruption, thou art my father; and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." She had been buried in a deep and melancholy reverie some hours, fearful of moving, when the paper which was wrapped around the taper suddenly caught fire, and emitted a strong gleam of pale light over the features of her sister. She raised her head, and saw

with blended feelings of grief and astonishment, they were fast changing into the lived hues of death. She trembled, and lifting her hands, exclaimed in a low fervent voice,

"Oh, merciful Power! prolong, if it seemeth to thee good, prolong her wretched existence, that she may yet become one of thine. I ask not her life; but oh, grant her the light of thy countenance, that ere she go hence, her spirit may be purified! The silence of night is around her—let not a deeper night environ her. Hear my supplications and accept them. Oh, let not her soul go down in darkness to the grave! Let her not leave me in despair!"

A deep sigh from Rosalind interrupted this ardent prayer. She started, and bending over her with intense emotion, saw that her cheeks were bathed in silent tears stealing fast from her down-cast lids.

"Dearest Rosalind," she anxiously cried, "I fear—I fear, I have disturbed you—I have awoken you—I was afraid you were worse——"

Rosalind flung one arm around her, and pointed the other to Heaven! "I did not sleep—I have heard your prayers. For me they are unavailing"—A stifled cry of agony escaped her pallid lips—"but *they* will be saved! Oh Felicia! My Felicia! My sister—my sister! Oh that I might but meet thee again! O that I could but go where thou wilt be!" She raised her shadowy form to look eagerly and earnestly in her sister's face, as if to take a long, last farewell. A gleam of lingering love lighted the dulled eyes as she gazed—but for a moment only—a film shadowed their lustre—the lids closed—a dark cloud passed over her divine features—the pulse grew fainter and fainter—Felicia grasped her cold clammy hands—the pressure was feebly returned, and the dim eyes again opened—they dwelt sadly, yet fondly, on the countenance of her sister—the heavy lids closed once more—the features became fixed and steadfast—the pulse fluttered—stopped—Felicia knelt to receive the last breath—but the struggle of nature was over—the weary way-worn spirit had fled.

Felicia hung over the senseless corpse with feelings she strove not to repress. The hand of death had already robbed her once-brilliant countenance of that enchanting beauty which had undone her—the temples were sunk—the forehead was tense—the numberless graces that once resided there were fled—scarcely a charm remained to deck his victim for her untimely tomb, but the beautiful hair already tinged with streaks of silver; and when she gazed on the ashy features—the heavy eyelids—the despairing brow—Felicia could scarcely realise it to herself, that this was the gay and blooming Rosalind,—the bright illusive meteor whose dazzling but dangerous effulgence had been equally fatal to herself, and all around her. She wept—bitterly wept—yet she did not wish the freed spirit could again reanimate its ruined

mansion. She loved her; but she was fallen from her high estate; and to the guilty, she knew, this world is but a world of sorrow—while to the penitent, the next is a world of glory.

Rosalind was one of those wandering phosphoric lights which illumine the darkness of night—beautiful, but delusive—bright, but unreal. Felicia resembled the steady flame whose beams are more felt than seen—whose property it is to diffuse life, and heat, and animation, rather than to give splendour or brilliancy.

Rosalind was interred by her own desire near the mangled remains of Evanmore, in the retired churchyard, whither they were hastily consigned after his death, near London. He had been her husband—was the father of her child—and the last act of his life redeemed, in her eyes, every former fault; for that life was freely forfeited to avenge their mutual wrongs. In this request Felicia read a volume of consolation. Rosalind's was not a spirit to make humble confessions of guilt to a fellow mortal—nor yet to pour out passionate entreaties for pardon from on High in their presence; but the mental sorrow that bowed her to the grave, while in the prime of early womanhood, still radiant in surpassing beauty—and, more than all, the agony that rent her soul while hovering in its flight from earth, revealed that she was not one of those of whom it is awfully and emphatically said, "They have no bonds in death." And to Felicia her tears, her despair, her broken sobs, her muttered words of prayer, her solicitude for her children, were more convincing testimonials of an awakened conscience, and of a bruised contrite spirit, than that self-confidence of assurance and acceptance, which are so often deemed unequivocal signs of a religious state of mind.

Six months after Rosalind Leycester was laid by the side of her injured husband, Mr. Berkely became the husband of her sister, and the father of her little orphans. Jenny at the same time became a bride, and followed her beloved mistress to the Grove, where she and her husband were established by Mr. Berkely in a small farm near them.

Little remains to be said of those whose intercourse with the sisters, in some degree, coloured their destiny. Mr. Flickerton and Miss Beaumont did marry, and were as wretched and embarrassed as might have been expected from their absurdities and ungoverned natures. Mrs. Hustleton died at a good old age, when on a visit to the Osbornes, watched and waited upon with humble obsequious servility, during a long illness, by the whole Dursley family. She left no will! Whether she had promised, or hinted legacies to so many acquaintance, as well as relations, she despaired of contenting or even remembering all of them, and therefore thought it wiser to individualise none; or whether she had nourished resentment at former neglect, and thus gratified her love of tormenting; or whether she deemed it best to

let the law take its course, as in her own case, cannot be known ; but to the amazement of every one of the cousins, a nephew in humble circumstances, never mentioned by her—known to have been born but supposed to have died, came forward, and asserted his claim to whatever appertained to her. He proved the validity of his pretensions, and, with it, that her fortune was not the half of what she had boasted of possessing !

The stream of Felicia's life thenceforth flowed in tranquil happiness along. She had no children—so the children of Rosalind became all she had hoped they would prove, when, broken-hearted, she dissolved her engagement with Evanmore. They were equally dear to Mr. Berkely ; and if the spirits of the departed are permitted to look down on the earth they have quitted, the erring Rosalind, and poor Evanmore, would see that their mutual offspring were gradually training together in peaceful happiness to be meet inheritors of a glorious immortality.

No monumental stone marked where lay Evanmore and Rosalind ; but an iron railing enclosed them—and she whose hand placed it, often went, in after years, accompanied by two young hearts, tender as her own, to deck the sod that covered them with fresh flowers, and cherish the funereal plants that cast a mournful shade over their beloved remains !

The Soul yearning for fellowship with those it mourns is not forbidden to offer entreaties that the broken chain may be reunited in a better land ; and thus the prayers, fervent but humble, poured out by Felicia and her gentle companions, while engaged in these last offices of love, could not be offensive to Divine Majesty.

THE END.

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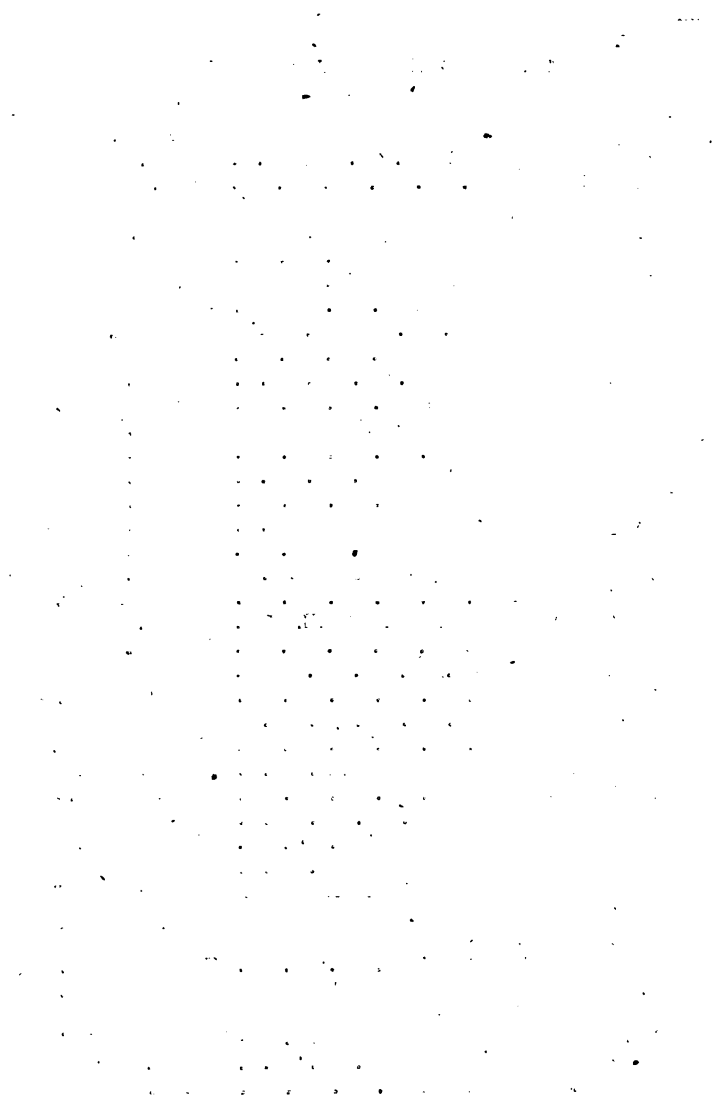
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